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ABSTRACT

A unique collection of photographs and personal letters, journals and diaries, newspaper clippings, official reports, readers and textbooks, mail-order catalogues, architectural plans and diagrams recreate the flavor of the Canadian one-room school and the rural communities it served from the 1840's to 1960's. The emphasis is on the human dimension--on the memories, bitter and sweet, of the people who experienced the one-room school as teacher or student, inspector or public health nurse, parent or trustee. The smell of chalk dust and wet mittens, the crackle of the wood fire on a crisp winter morning, the drone of flies in summer's dusty heat all come to life. Chapters are devoted to school construction and furnishings, including the wood-burning stove; the life of country children who often trudged miles to school through snow, dust, or mud, when they could be spared from work on the farm; a typical day in the rural school; readers and textbooks; the Christmas concert; the schoolyard with its playground, outhouses, wood pile, gardens, and horse barn; the influence of inspectors and the school nurse; the role and status of the rural teacher; responsibilities of the trustees; and the decline and disappearance of the one-room system. (NEC)

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The One-Room School in Canada

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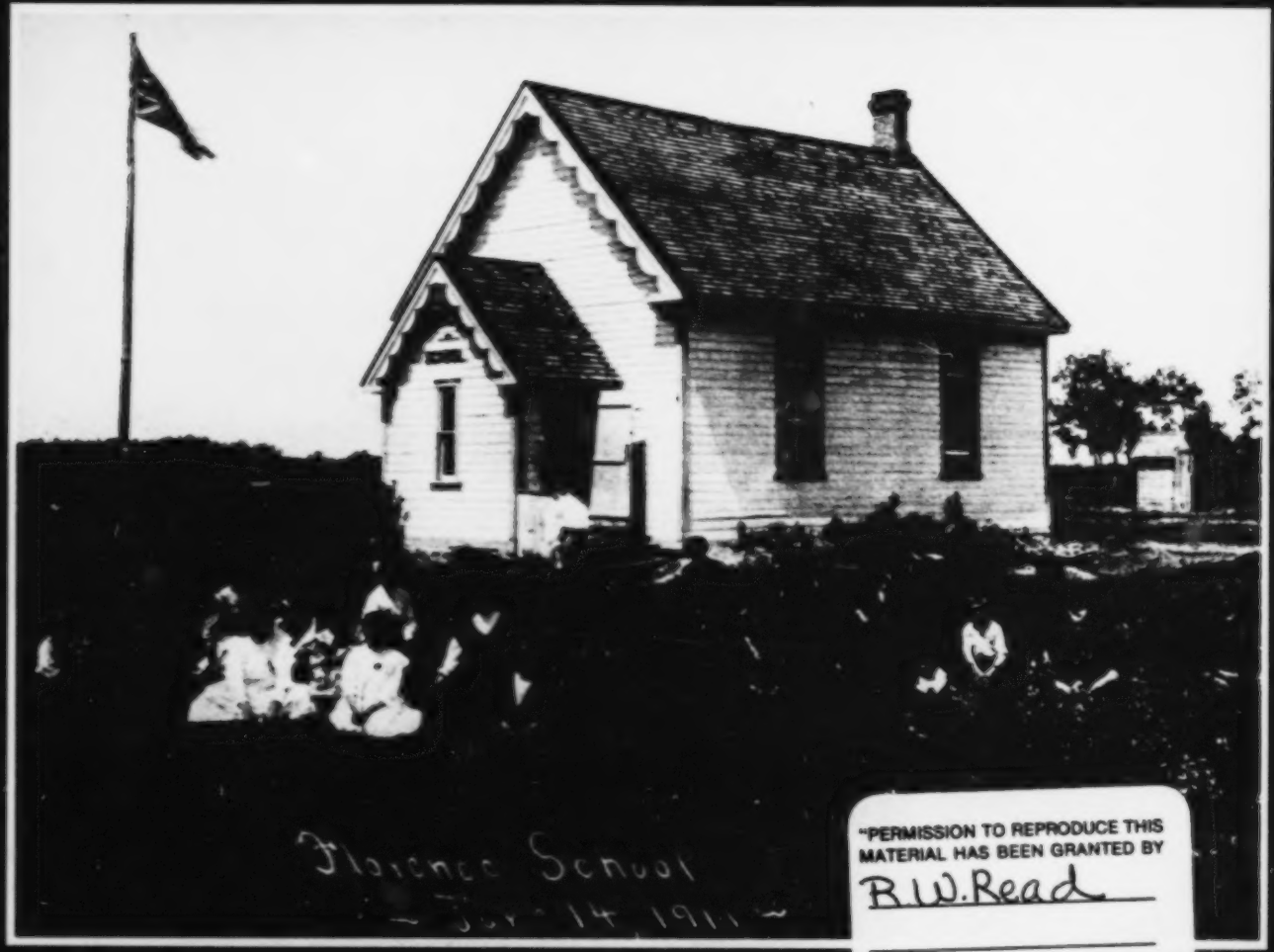

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Jean Cochrane

The One-Room

School in Canada

Fitzhenry & Whiteside

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Aikins school, near Kenaston, Saskatchewan

Illustration of schoolhouse design, Eaton's Catalogue, 1912-13

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My Uncle William was one of the first advocates of free schools, and he once broached the subject at a meeting at Barrie. "What do you need such schools for?" stuttered one of the Family Compact champions. "There will always be enough well-educated old-countrymen to transact all public business, and we can leave the Canadians to clean up the bush."

Pioneers of Old Ontario
W. L. Smith
George N. Morang, 1923

The mists of nostalgia

have closed quickly over Canada's one-room schools, though there are thousands of Canadians still in their prime who learned their alphabets and did their first sums in them.

The schools belong in spirit to an era in Canadian life that has largely vanished. In this crowded, impersonal world, they have come to stand for some of the values people feel are missing. They were a part of their communities, woven into their lives as few schools are now. Every child, for good or for ill, was a known quantity to the teacher. Every family knew the teacher. The community hired her and supplied her with room and board.

If the neighbours didn't build the school themselves, they hired someone they knew to do it for them, and they maintained it. They climbed up on the roof to repair it. They climbed down the well to clean it. They painted the school, and they paid for it. They bought supplies with money raised at box socials and picnics held on the grounds. They used it as a meeting place, a dance hall, and sometimes as a church.

The one-room school system lived beyond its time, its life prolonged by the money shortage of depression years, the stern concerns of war years, and the long, strong struggle of rural people to preserve it.

Most of the schools closed in the 1960s, but in every province there are still a few. They still serve, as they

did at first, small, scattered communities, whose children would otherwise have to travel miles to get to a school, if they could get there at all.

In Canada's early days there was no such thing as schooling for everyone in the modern sense, though in the older towns there came to be a variety of schools, privately operated and exclusive, run by churches, or run by charities for the children of the poor.

In Niagara, in the early nineteenth century, "there were private schools, the district grammar school, church schools, separate schools, ladies' schools, classical schools, night schools, boarding schools, schools for coloured children, dames' schools, and the fort school."

In country areas there was no such profusion, though the catch-as-catch-can effect was the same. Schools were started by churches, the Hudson's Bay Company, by entrepreneurs, itinerants, and, in backwoods settlements, by anyone who cared enough and had the time to teach children to read and figure.

It was during the 1820s and 1830s that governments began to take an interest, supplying some grant money to local communities for common schools, but parents still paid fees, and it remained a voluntary system. There were no standards for teachers or for textbooks. Whoever or whatever was available was used. Usually, the qualification of the teacher wasn't considered; it was enough to know he was willing to take the position. Most of the stories of brutal, drunken schoolmasters and of the tawse, the strap and willow rod date from this period. Teachers gagged a whisperer with a wooden stick, and put hot mustard on the tongue of a liar.

Teachers were often men who were physically unfit for work in other trades in those times when a strong body was a necessity. Some of them were men a Nova Scotia legislator called "shipwrecked characters," social discards for more reprehensible reasons.

It was a matter of small concern for many of Canada's early settlers. They not only had no tradition of education other than, perhaps, apprenticeship, they could see no need for it. Up through the 1850s, most of them worked in primary industries as farmers, fishermen, lumbermen, hunters and trappers. Why did they need education?

It was an attitude that was encouraged by some of the privileged because it helped ensure their own status and control. Some of the British elite tried to impose England's social patterns and education systems in British North America, as the name of one of their charity schools reflects clearly. The National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church was imported into Newfoundland and the Maritimes to encourage right thinking among the masses.

But the mid-nineteenth century was a time of social change. The industrial revolution was underway in Europe and the United States. There was an increasing democratization in the western world, and a levelling of class lines in British North America. In the old provinces, the roughest pioneer stage was long past for many families. United Empire Loyalists had settled in, and part of the baggage they brought with them, as did some Scottish settlers, was experience of an organized rural school system.

There was, in several countries, a boom in education, and the provinces were ready to share in it. In 1837 the Canadas had their rebellions, followed by the Durham Report. Then in the 1840s, as responsible government was established and villages and townships organized, the government-controlled, public school systems stuttered to a start.

There was continuing opposition, some of it from the churches. Denominational religious training was considered an important, almost a prime element in education, and churchmen were not happy with the prospect of secularized, state-run schooling. A New Brunswick educator wrote: "By some it is seriously contended that secular education, if unaccompanied by direct religious training is worse than useless, highly dangerous. The natural and only effect, we are told, would be to train up a race of 'clever devils'."

Religious feeling ran high and was a vigorous factor in politics and society. There were passionate factional disputes in which secular power, class structure, control of education and government money were inextricably entangled. It was one of these disputes that brought Canada's patron saint of education riding out of southwest Ontario to challenge an establishment giant.

This was the heyday of Methodism. Its preachers were riding their circuits in England, in the United States and in Canada's backwoods, gaining hundreds of converts. The establishment didn't always find it

convenient to tend these scattered flocks, but that didn't mean they were willing to let them go easily into the fold of the so-called non-conformist churches. Those churches were not allowed to own land, their baptisms and marriages were not considered legal, and, in Upper Canada, they were not allowed to benefit from the Clergy Reserves, land set aside to provide income for Protestant clergy.

In Toronto, a powerful, prominent Family Compact figure, Anglican Bishop John Strachan, unleashed a salvo against the Methodists in a published sermon. It was answered in print by a 23-year-old Methodist preacher, Egerton Ryerson, a piece of impertinence that set the province buzzing.

It would also launch Ryerson. Partly on the strength of his debate with Strachan, this son of a prosperous backwoods farmer was appointed editor of a Methodist paper. After several years in that post, most of which he spent in the centre of political and religious controversies, he was appointed principal of Victoria College in Cobourg. Finally, in 1844, he was named Upper Canada's first superintendent of schools.

The first thing Ryerson did after this appointment was to take a year to travel in Europe and look at school systems there. Then he wrote a report with recommendations that would set the tone for public school education in all of Canada's provinces. He said education should have a religious foundation, though he did not approve of sectarian teaching. And he laid down a curriculum that went beyond basics. It included grammar, geography, science and arithmetic, but was to be enriched with music, drawing, history, civics, nature study, physical training and hygiene.

Then he rode the circuit through Upper Canada again, this time preaching free, universal education, selling the idea of schools supported by taxes and open to everyone. He was not alone. If he was the biggest name and acknowledged leader in education, there were men in other provinces just as dedicated. These first chief superintendents exhorted, orated, begged, demanded, pushed and pulled to build a regard for education and get the public system working.

John McNeill of Prince Edward Island said in his 1842 report, "It is to be trusted that the day is not far distant when ignorance shall be held by all to be a greater affliction than poverty. When all shall appreciate the value of education and seek it in earnest for their children, when our youthful population shall have a fair start in the race of life."

Egerton Ryerson

But taxes are never popular, and this new notion that anyone should pay taxes to keep other people's children in school was met with howls of outrage and indignation. A member of the Nova Scotia legislature called the idea tyrannical and oppressive. Communism in education, spluttered Bishop John Roaf in Montreal. Citizens in Victoria tried the tax for a year, didn't like it and refused to pay it after that.

A school inspector in the County of Beauce in Quebec reported, "The municipality has been assessed and although the school rates amount to but a small sum for each individual, the majority of the rate payers refuse or neglect to pay them." Elsewhere in Quebec, people carried their protests further. During the "War of the Candle Snuffers," they took children out of school, threatened supporters of free schools, and even burned a few schools.

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Some of the feeling against taxes was understandable. Cash was unbelievably scarce in rural areas, especially in depression times. And it was very hard to earn. For instance, in Vespra, Ontario oats were reaped by hand with a cradle, threshed with a flail, carried 70 miles over primitive roads to Toronto, where they sold for 25 cents a bushel.

Gradually the storm subsided. Ontario had free and universal education in 1871, Nova Scotia in 1864, P.E.I. in 1877, and it was adopted by the Western provinces as they joined Confederation. Even in Newfoundland, where the churches retained control of school administration, and in Quebec with its Protestant and Roman Catholic school committees, the education systems were universal and tax-supported.

The last half of the nineteenth century continued to be an exciting time in Canada. People were pouring into the country, doubling its population to 3,690,000, between 1841 and 1871, and again by 1911. New provinces were being formed, and Confederation extended. Uniform currency was established in 1870, the railroads were being built, roads improved, the franchise widened.

Education remained part of the excitement, as one by one the bricks were put in place. Normal schools were established to train teachers, inspectors started on their rounds, authorized textbooks appeared. Language and religious divisions were argued. By the end of the century, compulsory attendance laws were imminent, and the pattern of the present school year was accepted everywhere that weather and travelling conditions made it feasible. The number and percentage of children attending schools got bigger and bigger, and one-room schools began to sprout like dandelions, dotted around the countryside to serve the next hundred years.

A country church and school at Clover Bar, Alberta, about 1910

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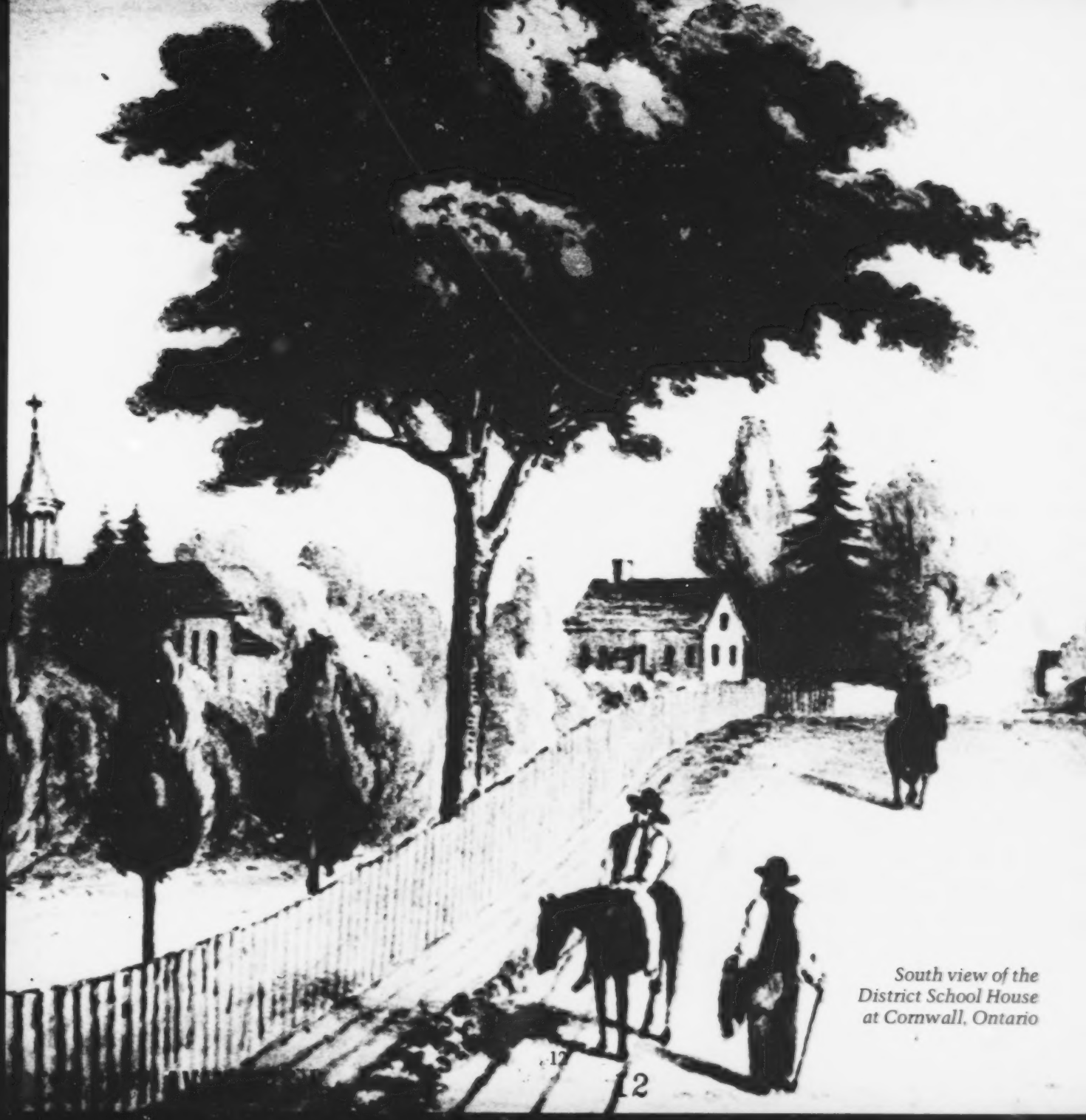

South view of the District School House at Cornwall, Ontario

My aim is to secure and perpetuate the blessing of a free, comprehensive and Christian education for every child in the land.

The other class of them are educated as paupers or as ragged scholars. Is it not likely that children educated under this character will imbibe the spirit of it?

If we would wish them to feel and act and rely on themselves as free men when they grow to manhood, let them be educated in that spirit when young.

Egerton Ryerson
Upper Canada, 1850s

There is a class of Teachers who have been teaching for some years without system, without motive, only for the £/s/d. Such Teachers are almost without education, and while they are incapable of improvement themselves, stand in the way of those that would improve. Closely connected with these are another class of cheap Teachers, who never remonstrate for a moment against the evil of "boarding 'round" from house to house, and who, instead of studying are spending their precious time in joke-telling, thus probably corrupting the manners of the youths about them – and indulging in tobacco smoking or snuff-taking.

Upper Canada, 1850
The Establishment of Schools and Colleges in Ontario
J. George Hodgins

The first school I went to was held in a log shanty 12 by 14 feet. The teacher was in the habit of getting drunk, and when he was incapacitated, his wife took his place. At noon hour, on my first day at school, she locked us in, as she said, to prevent the bears from getting us while she went to dinner. Tiring of the confinement before the hour was up, we determined to get outside. The only means of exit was a hole in the gable end of the shanty. This difficulty was gotten over by one boy standing on the shoulders of another and so reaching the top log. Then he pulled the others up in turn and all slipped out of the hole in the gable end.

Huron County, Ontario
Pioneers of Old Ontario
By W. L. Smith
George N. Morang, Toronto, 1923

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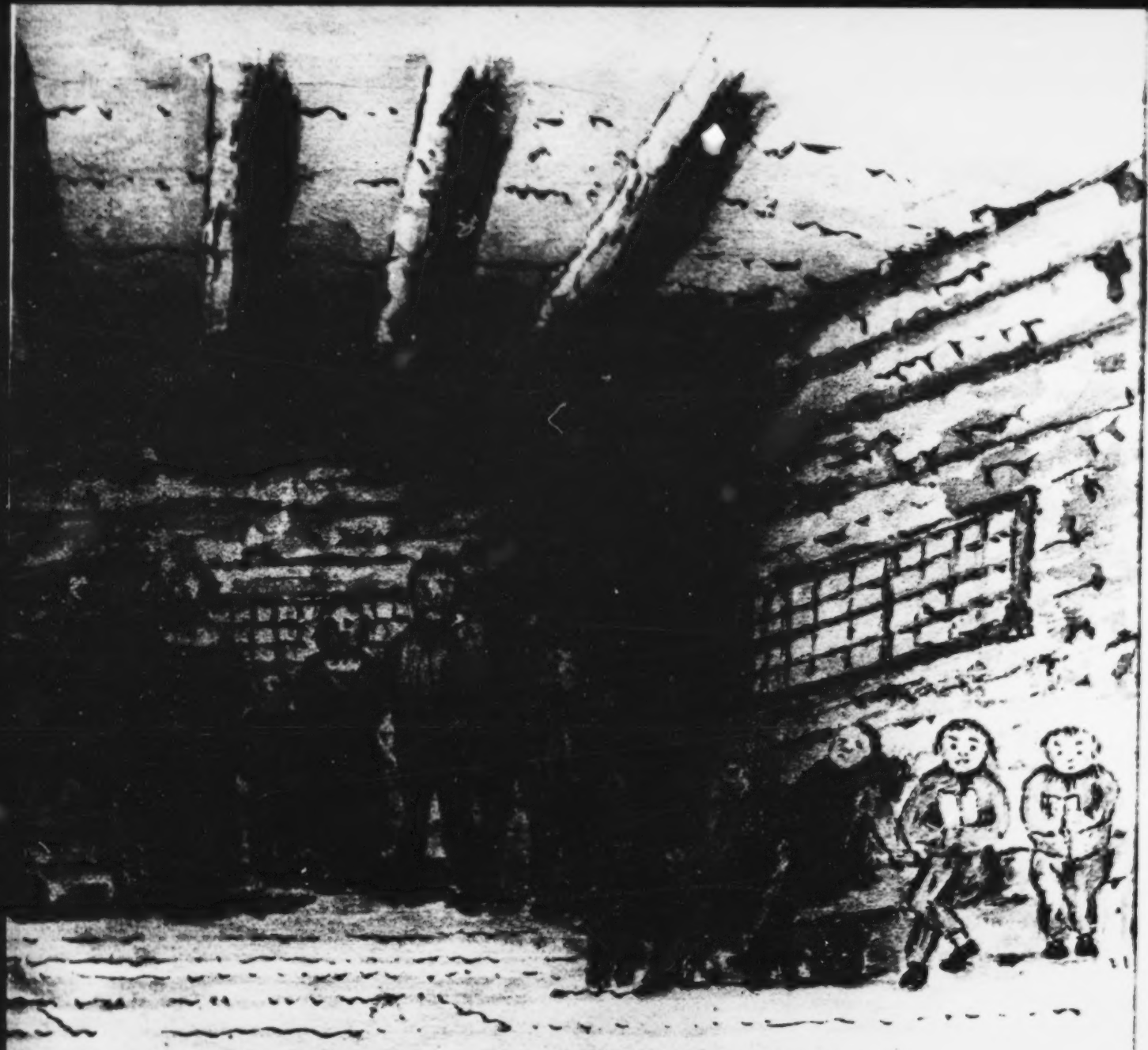

March of Intellect.

School in Adelaide
visited Dec. 1845
Teacher Mr St Leger
Sketched at the time

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The first one-room schools

built by settlers were hasty shelters, made of whatever was handiest, just as their first homes were. As pioneer conditions receded and a community prospered, the log shanty homes were replaced by more substantial ones, and so, eventually, was the log-built school, though that didn't always happen as fast as it might have. Inspectors grumbled about it in their reports, and threatened to withhold grants if a school was bad enough, but it was an uphill fight in some communities. "Early log" was a style preserved by poverty right up through the 1930s.

In newly-settled areas during the Depression years, people still held bees to build log school houses. Alberta issued plans for building them. People used their small school grants to buy windows, a door, bricks for the chimney and beaverboard to paint and use as a blackboard. The furniture was home-made.

Very often two or three school buildings replaced one another in a school section as the years passed. Some were built to improve an old one, but some were built because the old one burned down or fell apart. The mortality rate among them was fairly high.

Sometimes the schools had alarming disabilities that could be laid at the door of their amateur builders, and education departments tried to help prevent that. They supplied plans and advice on how to build a school, decorate it, heat it, ventilate it, situate it. Eaton's

sold plans in its catalogs. But the plans weren't always followed.

For instance, the huge windows were supposed to be designed to let in as much light as possible from the best angle. If boards didn't understand that, they might arrange things badly so that the children were working in their own shadows. And the windows were the only source of light in many schools. Much of rural Canada didn't get electricity until after World War Two, and even when they did, they didn't always take it into the school. A 1941 survey showed only 37 percent of rural schools had electric lights.

A lot of teachers recall winter afternoons when they gave up trying to work in the dusky light, and gathered the children around the stove to read to them.

As time went on, and the little schools multiplied, there was a variety in their looks that grew out of their geography and vintage, and the whims of the people who built them. But inside, all across the country, the atmosphere was the same, a compound redolent of dusty floors, chalk, wood smoke and steaming woolen mittens.

In the winter the big windows let in freezing drafts of cold air. In the spring and fall, the warm, distracting sounds and smells of the countryside were wafted in, and along with them, some of the wild life, including flies, great groggy brutes that were a plague.

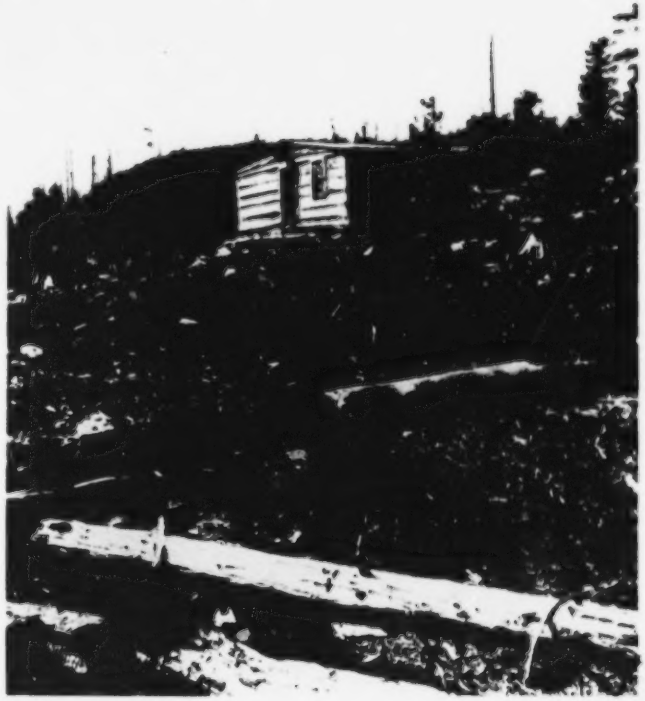
If there wasn't money for furnishings, people made shift. There were, for instance, substitutes for expensive slate blackboards that ranged from simple black paint on a board to this laborious effort suggested in a P.E.I. manual in 1877.

"(a) If the walls are brick the plaster should be laid upon the brick and not upon the laths as elsewhere; if frame, the part to be used for a blackboard should be lined with boards and the laths for holding the plaster nailed firmly on the boards.

"(b) The plaster for the blackboard should be composed largely of plaster of Paris.

"(c) Before and after having received the first coat of colour, it should be thoroughly polished with fine sand paper.

"(d) The liquid colouring should be laid as follows: – Dissolve gum shellac in alcohol, four ounces to the quart; the alcohol should be 95 percent strong; the dissolving process will require at least twelve hours. Fine emery



flour with enough chrome green or lampblack to give colour, should then be added until the mixture has the consistency of thin paint. It may then be applied, in long even strokes, up and down, the liquid being kept constantly stirred."

The author of another handbook also advises going to all that trouble, although he then observes that it doesn't really make a very satisfactory blackboard.

There were even recipes for home-made chalk. "Five pounds of plaster of Paris and one pound of wheat flower; mix with water and knead. Roll it on a pin board 3' x 9". Roll mass into a ball. Cut slices from it and cut stripe 4" x 1/3". Then roll smooth and round. Dry them for at least 12 hours."

In time, of course, proper slate blackboards lined two walls, to be covered top to bottom in problems, questions, season's greetings and, down in the corner, a picture or a map done in coloured chalk by a lucky kid.

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Ecole du Lac Paul Baie, Quebec, 1939

The desks, even when they were factory-made to department specifications, exhibited a fanciful variety over the years, from Victorian gingerbread to severely utilitarian. But they all had an inkwell in the corner and a trough for pencils, and they all accumulated initials and hearts. Most also had some interesting potential for distraction; they'd tip easily, or pinch toes, or at the very least provide a sloped surface for racing rolling pencils. Education departments advised that desks be bolted to the floor, but if they were, they couldn't be moved out of the way for a dance.

In the corner of every rural school, there was a shelf or an old table with a water bucket or an earthenware cooler on it. If the teacher was enthusiastic about hygiene, and had a well, she sometimes had a bucket of water put on the stove to heat up as wash water.

"We brought water in from the well, of course. We fixed up a sink, had a great big paint pail for dirty water. A lot of kids had no hot water at home. It would do your heart good to see them stand and lather with soap. My landlady laundered the little bits of towel."

By far the most important piece of furniture in any school was the wood stove. A few schools had furnaces, but in most it was the cantankerous, demanding, wood stove that dominated the room and exacted the services of everyone connected with the school.

Some stoves were nothing more than metal barrels. Some had elaborate metal jackets that were supposed to help diffuse heat. All of them were heated until they glowed dangerously, by students and teachers yearning to be warm. And they smoked. If they didn't smoke naturally, they were sometimes encouraged by conscientious seekers after freedom. The long pipes fell mysteriously down, filling the room with soot and smoke, and breaking up the monotony of the day.

And a fusillade of woofs and bangs echoes in

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Pouce Coupé District, Alberta

memory down the years from exploding bottles and pails left too near the heat. Occasionally pranksters added gunpowder or shells to the fire to liven up a dull morning.

The stove was also a cook stove blending the lovely, maddening aroma of cocoa, soup or baking potatoes with the atmospheric mix. Some communities, encouraged by officialdom, supplied the cocoa or milk to be sure the children had something warm at noon. Funds came from the school board or from the women's groups, or were raised at community parties.

In some cases, the teacher presided over the preparation of a proper hot lunch, of stew or beans brought from home, and when times were hard, she made a kind of co-operative soup. One child brought a potato, another a carrot or an onion to go into the pot in the morning and be soup by noon. Sometimes the school garden was used to grow root vegetables that were stored by the neighbours and cooked up in cold months, so the children got a hot dish of turnips or carrots as part of a rib-sticking winter lunch.

A few boards paid teachers for making lunch, but more just told them it was part of the job. In years when jobs were hard to come by, teachers also agreed to sweep out the school, though in the best-ordered schools the trustees hired an older student or a neighbour to act as janitor. He was supposed to see to the fire every morning and keep some sort of order in the dusty, fusty schoolroom, sweeping out once a week or so. Sometimes all these things happened, and sometimes they didn't. More than one former caretaker talks about getting to school just minutes before the teacher, lighting the fire as fast as he could, then holding a match under the thermometer, hoping to convince everyone that the room was warm.

A lot of teachers dealt with the chores in what was probably the surest way, by assigning the kids to take turns doing them during the school week.

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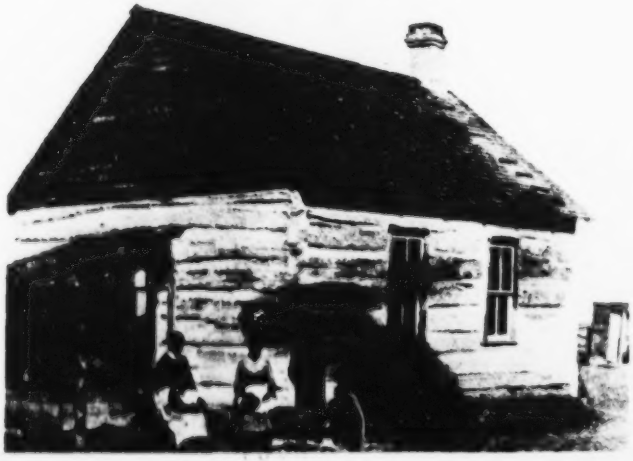

The School Houses, in many instances, although not all, are miserable shanties, made of logs, loosely and roughly put together; the interstices filled with clay, portions of which are from time to time crumbling down, filling the place with filth and dust.

Under your feet are loose boards, without nails, across which, when one walks, a clatter is produced equal to that heard in a lumber yard.

Over your head are the naked rafters, stained with smoke and hung with cobwebs and dust. Two or three little windows, generally half-way up the walls, admit the light; and a rough door, which does not fit the opening, creaks upon wooden hinges.

The writing desks are generally long, sloping shelves, pinned up against the walls, as high as the breasts of the Pupils who sit before them. The seats are without backs and from 18 inches to two feet high. Sometimes, in addition to these, we have a Master's Desk, but awkwardly constructed, for the most part – too high for the sitting posture, and too low for the standing. This completes the list of articles of furniture. We have no Blackboards, no Maps, and no illustrative apparatus of any kind.

Upper Canada, 1849
The Establishment of Schools and Colleges in Ontario
J. George Hodgins

Top: The first school on St. Joseph's Island, Algoma, Ontario

Middle: Smoking Tent School, Saskatchewan, 1944

Bottom: Beatrice School, Richland, Manitoba

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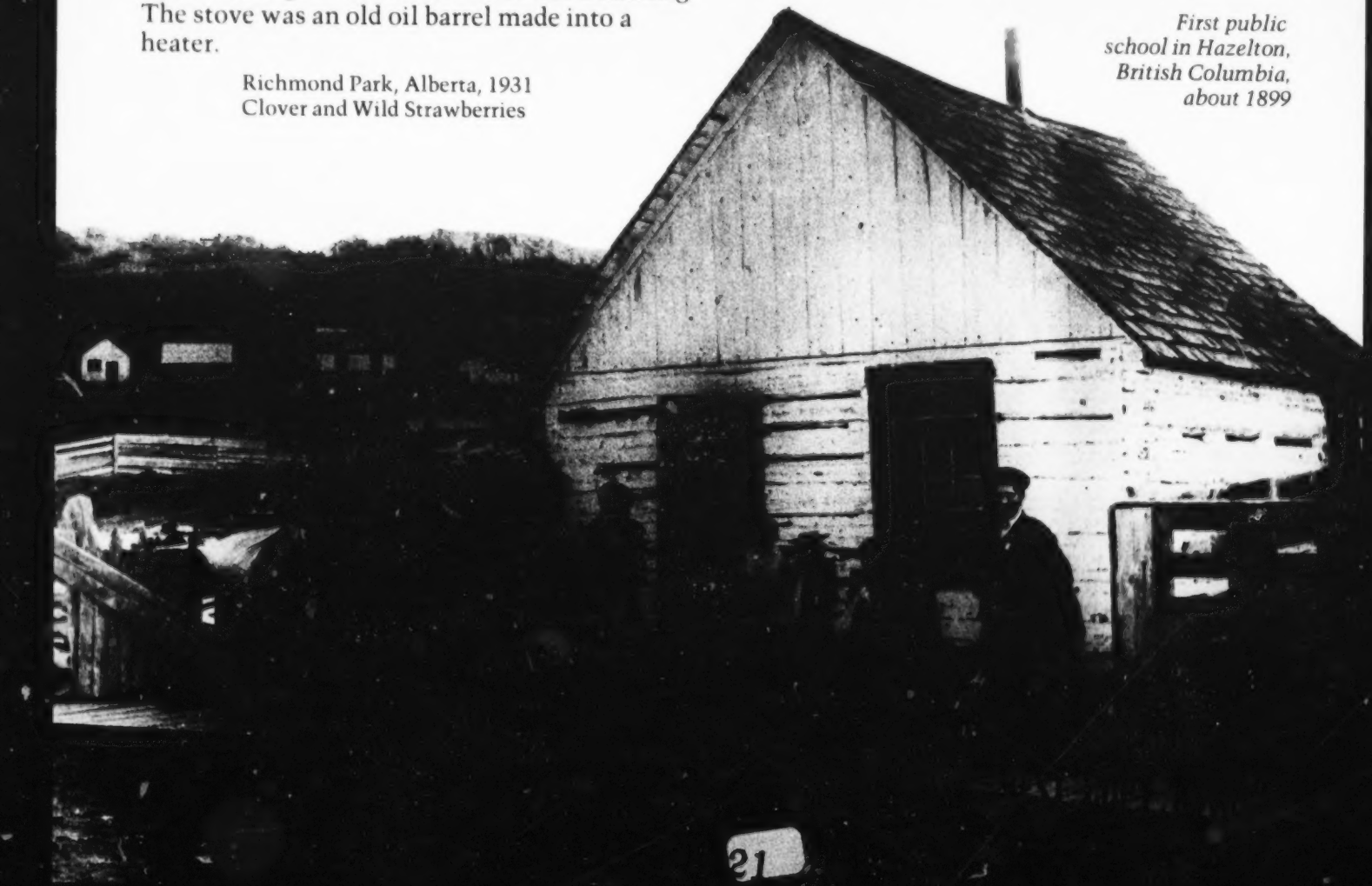
Perhaps the old building is still there. It was made of logs and mud (plaster) with very narrow, home-built benches and desks combined, a 10" wide desk three feet long to accommodate two students. The blackboard was of slated cloth, like a roll of oilcloth with a slated surface. Hanging against the logs it formed a very rough surface for a blackboard. There was no teacher's desk when I arrived but someone had bought a new binder and I got the crating boards and built a teacher's desk, as well as a table for the teacherage. The waste basket was a nail keg. The stove was an old oil barrel made into a heater.

Richmond Park, Alberta, 1931
Clover and Wild Strawberries

It is a Log Building. The roof is composed of basswood troughs. With the exception of the door, window sashes and Teacher's desk, the whole owes its construction to the chopping and broad axe. The interior I found scrupulously clean and ornamented with spruce branches. The Windows, not extensive affairs, were provided with curtains formed from newspapers, which, in every part of the Province, is a certain indication of a Lady Teacher.

Quebec, 1880



First public school in Hazelton, British Columbia, about 1899

The homesteader's first order of business was to build a house to live in and break a garden spot. Next was to get a road into the District. In the summer of 1929 the government built a road into our new settlement. New settlers were coming in and taking up land. It was decided we had to have a school, so a committee was formed.

We asked the government for a loan to start school, and were guaranteed bonds for $1500.00. To further pay school expenses, a tax of $7.50 was levied. By this time the bottom fell out of the market and the great depression started.

We secured a permit to cut logs for the school. Mr. C. Gagnon, Chairman of the Board, had a sawmill, so we cut logs and hauled them to his mill and a number of ratepayers worked off their building tax.

Cement was purchased for the foundation. A number of residents were pretty good carpenters, so the community went to work and built a schoolhouse. Money from bonds bought windows, nails, shingles, blackboards, teacher's desk, bell, etc.

The site was approved by the School Inspector.

Hammond School District, Alberta

Tawatinaw, Alberta, in the 1930s

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(I) The school house should be placed at least thirty feet from the public highway.

(II) In each room the area should be at least twelve square feet on the floor, and there should be at least two hundred and fifty cubic feet of air space for each pupil.

(III) There should be separate entrances with covered porches and suitable cloakrooms for boys and girls.

Ontario, 1885
Department of Education Regulations

The first loads of lumber were hauled from Gleichen, 35 miles south, over the Rosebud trail by the three elected trustees. Dan asked me to hold up the near-empty bottle of whiskey for the others to see as an inducement for them to catch up to him. Holding up the bottle of whiskey stimulated the drivers, but not the tired-out horses.

Alberta, 1903
History of the Severn Creek Public School

Kindersley, Saskatchewan

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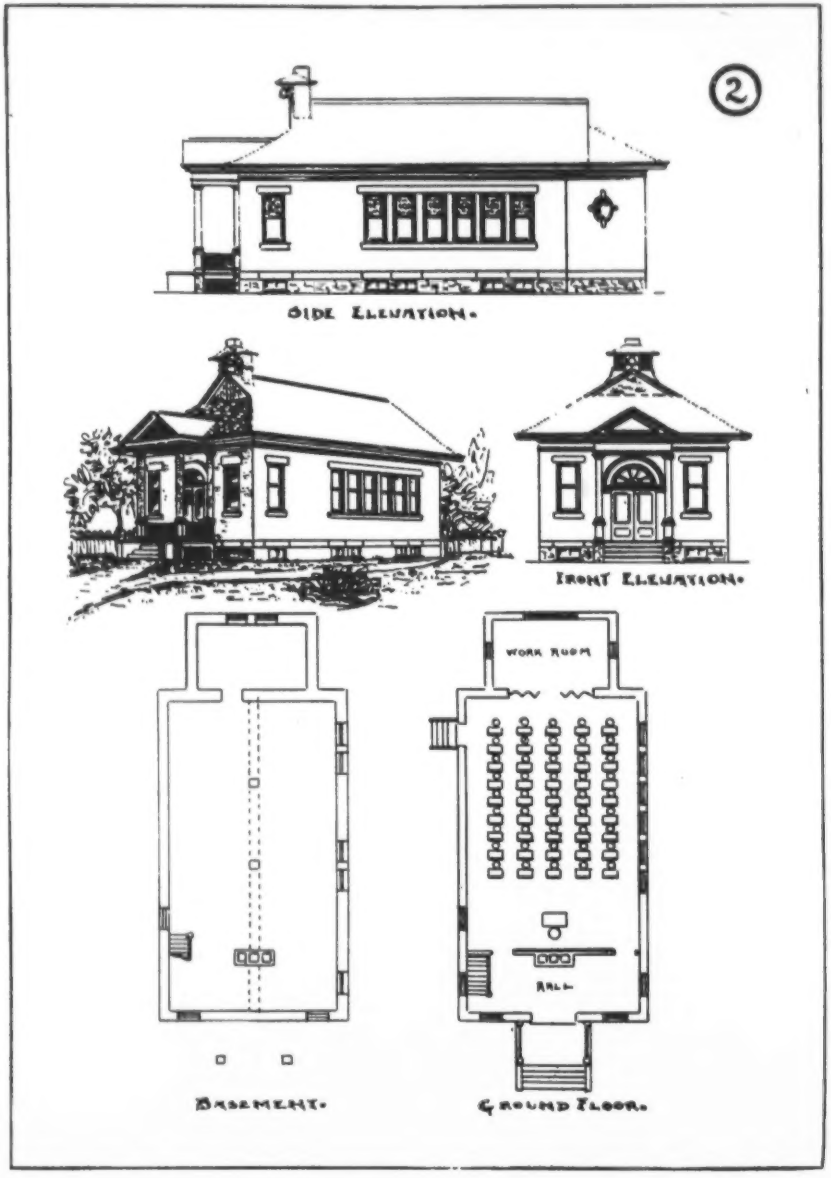

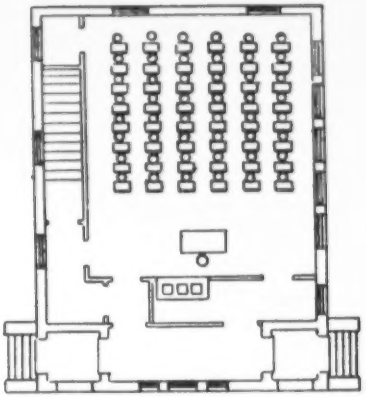

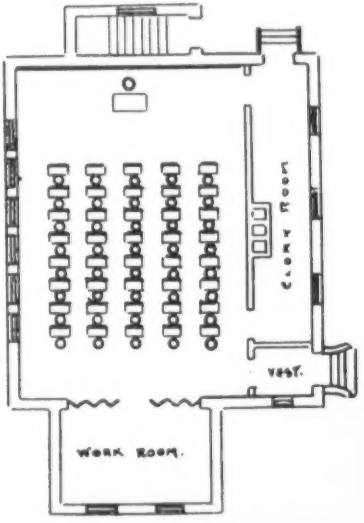

Local boards were offered a variety of recommended school designs in Plans for Rural School Buildings, *published by the Ontario Department of Education in 1909.*

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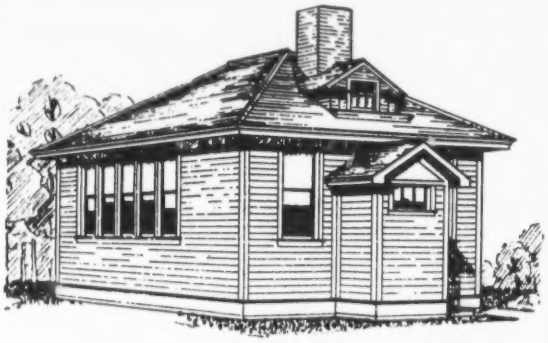
T. EATON Co. Limited
WINNIPEG CANADA

COMPLETE SET OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS



RURAL SCHOOL

Plan No. 690, 3 Sizes

This very neat and inexpensive school design is almost identical to that recommended by The Department of Education in the West. The plan calls for stock size windows and doors which are altogether suitable in every way for a school building, and comes very much lower in price than specially ordered stock.

The outside walls consist of shiplap, paper and No. 1 fir drop siding. The interior of the outside wall consists of shiplap, paper and No. 1 fir V joint ceiling. The ceiling is also covered with No. 1 fir V joint ceiling. The roof is made up of shiplap, paper and XXX cedar shingles. The floor has shiplap, paper and No. 1 E.G. fir flooring.

Write for Latest Quotations on Lumber

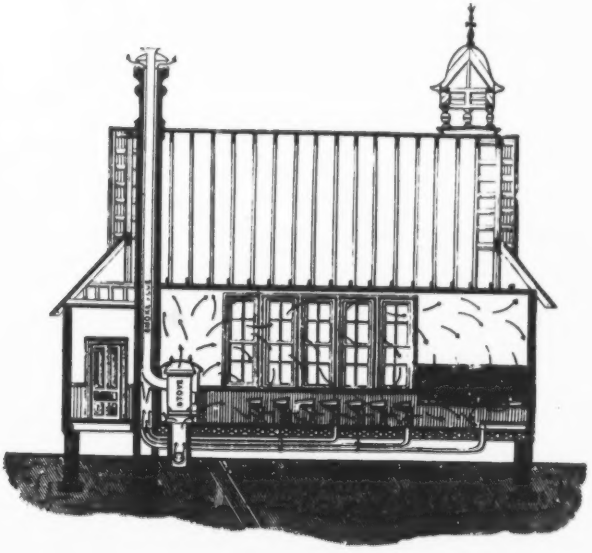
Additional lumber required to make 18,000 ft. carload.

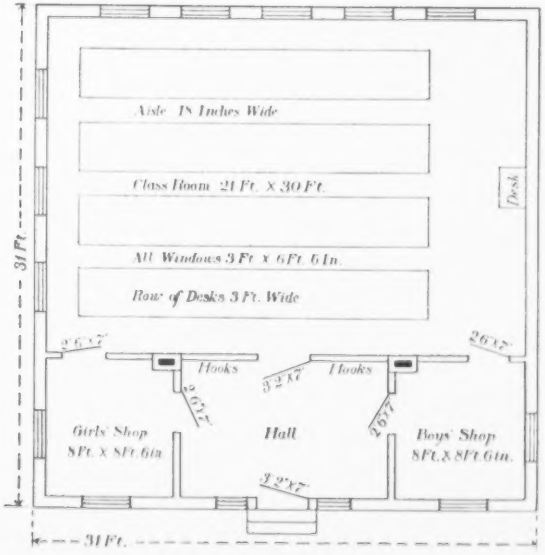
School 20 ft. x 30 ft., 10 ft. high,		School 22 ft. x 30 ft., 10 ft. high,		School 24 ft. x 32 ft., 12 ft. high,	
Lumber, 13,655 ft.	557.50	Lumber, 14,667 ft.	596.35	Lumber, 17,210 ft.	692.85
Paint, Shingle Stain and Putty		Paint, Shingle Stain and Putty		Paint, Shingle Stain and Putty	
Exterior	36.50	Exterior	36.50	Exterior	37.90
Interior	30.30	Interior	30.30	Interior	33.30
Hardware, F.O.B. Winnipeg	9.32	Hardware, F.O.B. Winnipeg	9.32	Hardware, F.O.B. Winnipeg	9.63
Nails, F.O.B. Winnipeg	22.46	Nails, F.O.B. Winnipeg	24.88	Nails, F.O.B. Winnipeg	27.86
Building Paper, F.O.B. Winnipeg	27.55	Building Paper, F.O.B. Winnipeg	27.55	Building Paper, F.O.B. Winnipeg	27.55
Total	683.63	Total	724.90	Total	829.09

In western Canada Eaton's sold not only complete plans for rural schools, but the construction materials as well. This design is from the 1917-18 Catalogue.

Below left: From School Architecture: Hints and Suggestions on School Architecture and Hygiene, *by J. George Hodgins, Ontario Department of Education, 1886*

Below: Illustration from Rural Arithmetic, *1913*





FLOOR PLAN OF SCHOOLHOUSE

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Kelso Settlement, Cochrane District, Ontario

The windows should be placed at the left end, if necessary, behind the pupils. Those at the back should be near the left corner. Windows should never be placed facing the pupils. The total area of window glass should equal at least one-fifth of the floor space.

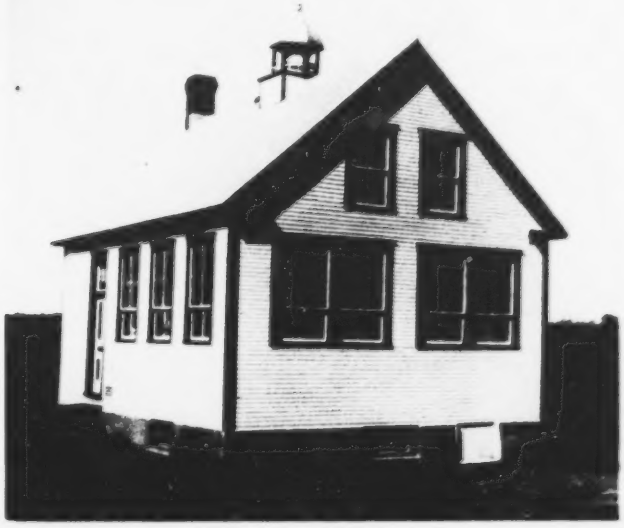
Ontario, 1910
Department of Education

One thing that impressed me was the quality and uniformity of the school buildings. They are all frame and nearly the same size, being about 22 feet wide and 30 feet long.

The windows are nearly always at the left of the pupils, with from four to seven windows so situated. But while two buildings may appear quite the same, such is not the case. Dishonest contractors too often take advantage of boards and trustees, and only mere shells of buildings are the result. I have seen cases where buildings costing only nine hundred dollars were in every way superior to some costing from fifteen to eighteen hundred dollars. I am pleased to know that greater care is being taken to see that school houses are built according to specifications.

Coronation, Alberta, 1914
Department of Education Annual Report
Inspector W. J. McLean

St-Georges de Windsor, Richmond, Quebec



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School construction in Manitoba, about 1905

Sometimes school boards do not call for tenders but undertake to build their school by day labour, the board superintending the work and employing the settlers as carpenters. This is a very poor policy. The school is not built as cheaply or as well as it would be built by a contractor, and trouble is almost sure to arise. In one district where this method was adopted the school already has cost nearly $1,000 more than it should have cost and it is not completed yet. In this case, worse than the waste of money is the hard feeling that has developed.

Alberta, 1930

The new rural school houses are generally of a creditable character, boards usually being willing to follow out the recommendations of the department; but occasionally schools are found where the recommendations as to lighting and ventilation have not been followed, windows being placed on each side and no provision made for ventilation. Trustees have told me they were more concerned about keeping out the cold air than about letting it in, and trustees frequently object to placing windows all on one side on the ground that such an arrangement is not so pleasing architecturally.

Lethbridge, Alberta, 1910
Inspector's Report

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20 seats with desks
1 desk
1 teacher's chair
2 visitors' chairs
1 map case
1 globe of the world
1 blackboard 4' x 10'
crayons and dusters
pail, basi
coal scuttle, etc.
2 bells
1 clock
hand numeral
1 Webster dictionary
1 thermom
1 waste paper basket
1 pointer
1 punishing strap
1 mirror
1.00
$208.05
Pine Lake, A
28
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The district, then called Swan Lake Public School District, was established February 20, 1894. The N.W.T. Gazette May 29, 1894 records permission being given to borrow $200. for the purpose of purchasing a school site, erecting a school house and buying equipment. An abandoned settler's log shack was situated on the chosen property and this was used as a school from 1896 – 1899.

All furnishings were homemade. The students sat on planks for desks. The stove was an old rusty cook stove which had been left by the former owner. School was in operation for four months of the year – the summer months. Slates were used mainly to save the scant supply of paper.

Burnt Lake, Alberta
Schools of the Parkland

But funds could not stretch far enough to furnish the new school, so each parent was required to provide seating for his own family. Picture the variety of colour and construction provided by those desks – a few factory-made, the rest depending on Dad's skill with a saw and hammer. One unlucky young fellow suffered a blow to both body and spirit the day his desk collapsed as he sat in it.

When school began in 1906, the pupils sat on planks set on top of empty nail kegs and they wrote on planks serving as desks. Most pupils wore home-knit stockings to school and some wore shoepacks with hay for insoles to keep themselves warm during the winter.

Melita School, Alberta
Schools of the Parkland

Uno Park School, Timiskaming District, Ontario, 1910-15

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Opposite top: Martinvale School, Prince Edward Island, about 1935

Opposite bottom: SS #1, Lindsay Township, Bruce County, Ontario

Overleaf: East Smoky Spruce School District, Saskatchewan, 1941

The box stove was the only heating. I have had a pan of water under my desk freeze while the children next to the stove smoked. I rotated the kids, not on the basis of class, but on the basis of who sat next to the stove.

Teacher
Ontario, 1935

The wood for the big school stove was supplied by the fathers of the children, each farmer being obliged to bring one load of wood yearly and place it on the wood pile, split up and ready for the stove, which was as big as a furnace.

Every child brought in a load of wood appropriate to their size, the little ones carried kindling, the big ones logs, and they filled the stove before they left.

The farmers brought the wood in. I think it sometimes served in lieu of taxes.

Ontario, 1938

The heater was made out of an old gas barrel. After a couple of years the barrel warped, thus creating a dip on the top of the stove. To add colour to their humble backwoods lives, one of the bigger boys decided now and again to bring some gunpowder to school. They secretly placed it in the hollow of the stove top. When the heater became real hot, the gunpowder went off with a muffled "woof" and a big black cloud of smoke filled the room. Now and again someone also decided to bring a .22 shell and put it into the heater to give the teacher an additional jolt.

And, of course, the big boys would bring bullets and put them into the stove.

British Columbia, 1920

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Ontario, 1957

For almost thirty years, the school was without a water supply. Sometimes they did without water, but generally it was brought from some of the homes. Water carriers were appointed, usually two of the older boys, whose duty it was to go to the Waltons, later on to the Scotts, for a pail of water. This was never a pleasant duty because it meant giving up the first recess or part of the noon hour to carry water, even more unpleasant for someone who had already walked two or three miles to school on a cold day. The pupils carried the water supply for the school from a spring about one-quarter of a mile to the west. If one went he usually got back with enough for everyone to have a drink, but if two boys went with the one pail it wasn't too successful. They would start out with a pailful of water carrying it between them. The ground was rough with many hummocks. This necessitated frequent rests, and maybe a wrestling match to relieve the monotony. The result was two boys each with a wet leg from slopping the water and only a scant amount in the bottom of the pail.

Alberta, 1918

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We had a school garden where we grew root vegetables that would be used in school lunches around the year. The carrots and turnips were stored with families that lived nearby. Then when the cold weather came, it would be announced that starting tomorrow, we're going to have school lunches. There'd be a little crew assigned, two boys and two girls, to get the soup ready or to cook turnips, and you'd have a hot dish of turnips, then they'd clean up.

Ontario, 1935

In order to have something warm for their noon lunch, the children would take turns bringing a pail of milk to school to make hot cocoa. This would be put on top of the stove to heat. One time they forgot to loosen the lid, and an explosion occurred, sending boiling milk to the ceiling.

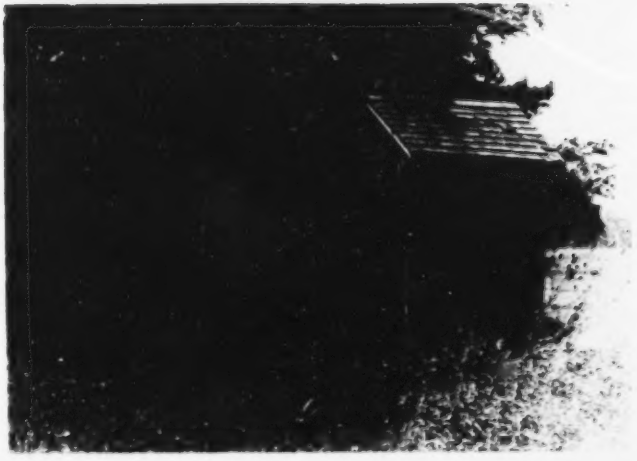
Alberta, 1937

Carrying water to Westminster School, Cochrane, Alberta

Biscotasing, Ontario

We have pulled the stumps out of a patch about a quarter of an acre, made a gravel walk to the school from the highway. Each week we have a (student) doctor and a nurse to see that everyone is clean, a policeman to keep the younger children off the highway, a fireman to keep the fire going during school hours, and also to cut the kindling. After school each day we take turns at sweeping the floor.

Farmborough, Quebec, 1935



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In the summertime you opened the door and raised the windows. There were no screens.

One of the first things I asked for in my second school was screens. Well, they said, we can get you the screens for the windows, but a screen door might be expensive.

The kids ate their lunch at their desks, and those poor kids couldn't get any work done because they were too busy catching flies. They all brought fly swatters, and we cleaned the place out. I said I can do a better job teaching your kids if I don't have to spend so much time chasing flies.

Ontario, 1935

They all had their little duties. So many washed the blackboards, some would bring in the water for the tubs and toilet, some would clean the brushes out.

On Friday afternoon we had housekeeping, and we cleaned up everything for the coming week. We brought wood and water in, cleaned up the woodshed and the outdoor toilets. We had 25 odd jobs to be done, and they thought nothing of it.

Ontario, 1935

Paroisse de Ste-Thérèse du Colombier, Québec

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3

Long before the schoolhouse opened

the day's work began, for many farm children, with chores or with a couple of hours of heavy work during busy seasons. Compassionate teachers knew that, and let a tired youngster sleep when it all got too much.

In 1826, in the earliest days of the one-room school system, an Ontario inspector wrote: "The ground was harrowed by a tree branch and the grain was ground in the hominy stump. As the children grew out of actual babyhood they could all help more or less on the farm, and only the very tiny ones could be sent to school."

Compulsory attendance laws were passed in the years surrounding the turn of the century, but it was almost impossible to enforce them. Absences didn't necessarily mean a family was indifferent to schooling. Farm work apart, there's a sad refrain through inspectors' reports, especially in Depression years, that children were kept from school by poverty because their parents couldn't afford proper clothing and footwear.

Then there was the long trek to school, along country roads that could be full of distraction in good weather, and potentially perilous in bad. People remember scuffing along dirt roads, playing catch with the lard pails that served as lunch buckets, checking gopher traps they'd set in the morning, chasing frogs, picking wild flowers. But what rural Canadians remember most clearly is the cold and the snow.

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Efficient winter clothes are recent innovations and they're expensive. Children just put on more layers in the winter, long underwear, woolen stockings, scarves, gaiters over their boots. In the west, they wore shoe packs with straw stuffed in them for insulation. They got wet and cold, and had to hope the stove would dry them out. They sat in the damp clothes all day and even kept heavy boots on, though that was supposed to affect your eyesight. Winter was the time for frozen cheeks, and chilblains to send shooting pains through young hands and feet. It was a time to be wary of the metal latches on the school and outhouse doors so you didn't freeze your hand to them.

Sometimes a farmer hitched up the sleigh to give the neighbourhood kids a lift to school, and in the Prairies kids made the trip in the winter in sleds with little sheds mounted on them, warmed by heated bricks or even small stoves. There are endless stories of children getting lost or spending hours sheltering in those sleds when a storm blew up suddenly.

If a rural teacher saw a storm coming, she'd send the children home early, or keep them at the school if it was too late to do anything else, though until the 1940s, when phones became common, there was no way to notify worried parents that the children were safe.

In areas where winter conditions made travelling most hazardous, in the Prairies and northern lake areas, for instance, school just shut down for the winter. When that happened the older children lost schooling both winter and summer, because as long as the one-room school system lasted, work on the farm came before education.

There were also epidemics of the standard children's diseases and of serious illnesses, of flu, diphtheria, poliomyelitis, that could clear an isolated school room.

All these factors added to normal discipline problems. Big boys, restless and bored and only at school half the time, liked stirring the pot. Then when a strapping resulted, so did a display of bravado calculated to maintain a high irritant quotient. There's a time-honoured story about the big boy who was strapped and said thank you when it was all over. Asked why, he said his parents always taught him to say thank you for anything he got.

The strap was standard issue in rural schools for many years. When it wasn't available, children were sent into the bush to cut switches as substitutes. Kids chose the lightest switches they could find, or nicked them so they broke when used, and didn't hurt. When they tried that, though, they risked having the teacher cut the next switch.

Women teachers say they preferred not to use the strap, or to use it sparingly for serious infractions. One cut hers up during the Depression and put it in her shoes when the soles wore through.

Occasionally, discipline problems could be serious. There are men who remember having to fight the biggest boys to establish their authority as teacher. And sometimes a school deserved a reputation for being truly tough. When that happened, it was because the community didn't restrain its young, and there was usually little a teacher could do but leave, although an appeal to outside authority might help.

"One of the first schools I had was a one-room school at Goulais Bay. They had had three teachers in September and October, and got rid of each by scaring them. The morning I came I said, 'Now, I'm not scared of anything, snakes, lizards, bears, nothing. And I'm staying. I'm not leaving.' I watched every stick of wood that went in the stove in case they had fire crackers. This went on for a week or so. Then one day when I opened the door, there were papers and books all over. It was cold, but I wouldn't let anyone in. I sent for the police, who really gave everyone a once over. I had no more trouble."

"A family in the community had a troublesome reputation, and I had one of their kids. One day he got ink on the back of a girl's dress. I told him to move, to go sit by himself. He said he wouldn't. I told him he could either sit where I told him or leave, and that's what he did, he left. Well, in the morning, his big brother brought him to school, and blocked the gateway with his cutter. I had to climb the fence to get in. This went on for a month. The boy would come into the school and take his seat. I'd tell him to move, and he'd go home. His brother waited for him. Finally I sent for the truant officer, and we were to go to court over it. Then they gave in.

"The boy was actually quite a nice boy, and smart. He told me later, 'If I do what you tell me, I get in trouble at home.'"

Fortunately for the teachers, it was usually the other way around – a child who got in trouble at school, got in trouble all over again at home.

"Father was on the School Board and every time

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he met our teacher he inquired as to our progress and behaviour. We had to be good or try to be. It seemed the teachers were always in the right and we were always in the wrong. 'Someone has to be in authority,' father said on one occasion, 'and it can't be the children, so you must obey your teacher.'"

Not all discipline problems were serious of course, but country children had a taste for pranks that kept things lively. If gingering up the fire with explosives got dull, or playing tricks with the desks and seats palled, you could always bring an animal into class and turn it loose. That gave the girls a chance the scream and giggle, and the boys the opportunity to add to the pandemonium by chasing the creature around.

The animals the teacher had to deal with weren't always alive or introduced as a prank. In Alberta for several years there were bounties on gophers, on crows and magpies. Children set traps and snares, some of them along their school route. Then periodically they took gopher tails, and the eggs and legs of the birds to school as proof of their kills, and teachers got to count them so payment could be made.

Feeding geese, Tofield, Alberta

Harvesting potatoes near Pincher Creek, Alberta, early 1900s

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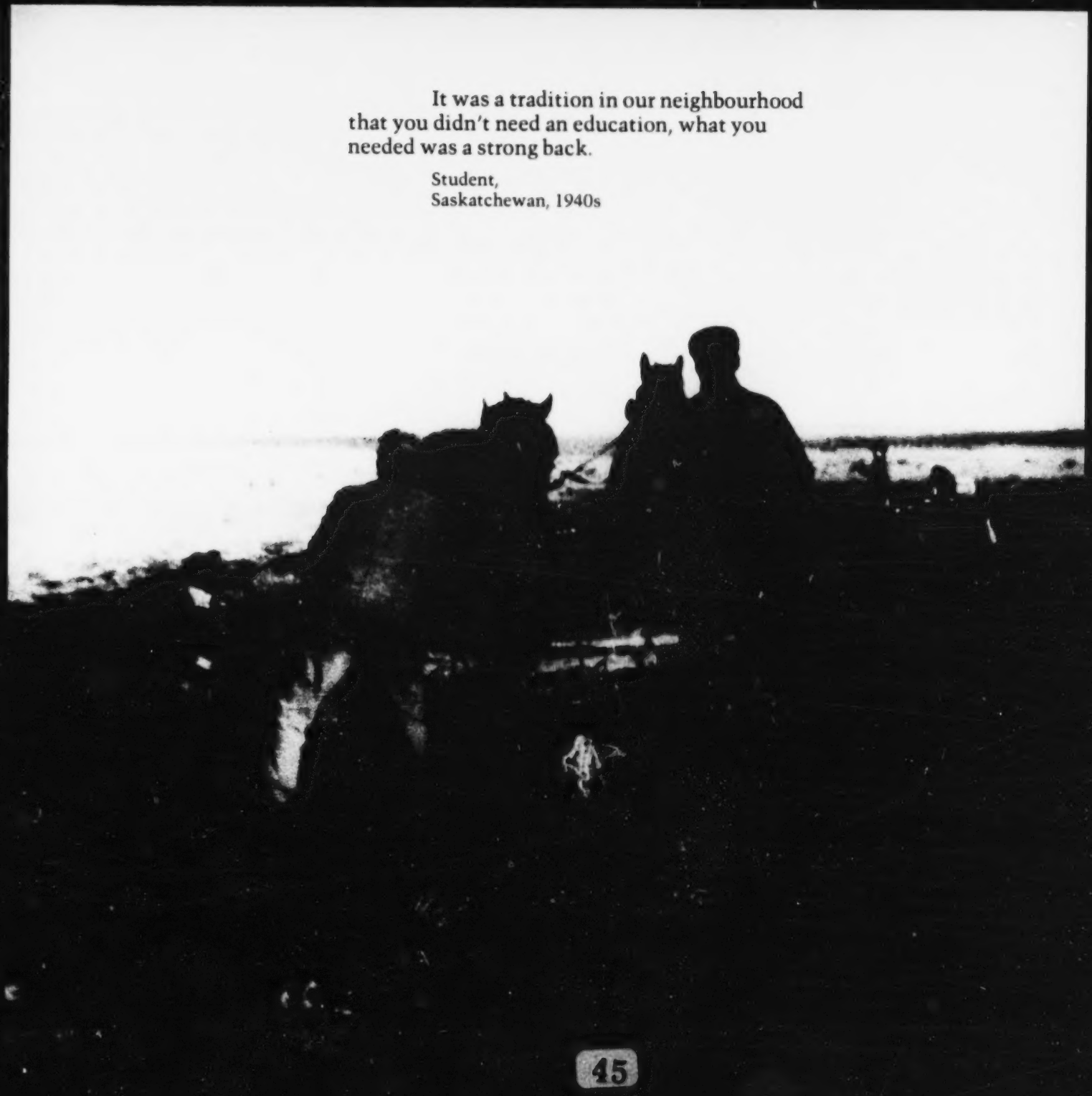
It was a tradition in our neighbourhood that you didn't need an education, what you needed was a strong back.

Student,
Saskatchewan, 1940s



The greatest obstacle to the progress of education is the indifference of the parents and the small concern they manifest in sending their children to school. This is evident from the frequent absences of the children, absences which are allowed on the slightest pretext. Moreover, children are removed from school too soon; but seldom a child of 12 years of age or upwards is to be found in these schools.

I admit that in those parts of the country in which every inhabitant maintains himself by field labour, the children, even of tender years, are in a position to render services to their parents, but I cannot refrain from making it a matter of reproach to the contributors.

Megantic, Quebec, 1860
Inspector's Report

Galician girls returning from school, Alberta

A large part of the inspectorate is timbered country and hence settlement is slow and roads, except when frozen, are very difficult to travel. Most of the people in the newer districts are poor and many of them are compelled to leave their homesteads for six months of the year to earn a little money to enable them to stay on their farms. It is not an uncommon thing to find men who have been three or four years on their homesteads with not more than ten or fifteen acres under cultivation. It is easy to see that under such conditions it is very difficult for people to maintain schools, and it touches one's sympathy to find here and there in these sparsely settled districts, families growing up without education.

Alberta, 1911
Department of Education Annual Report

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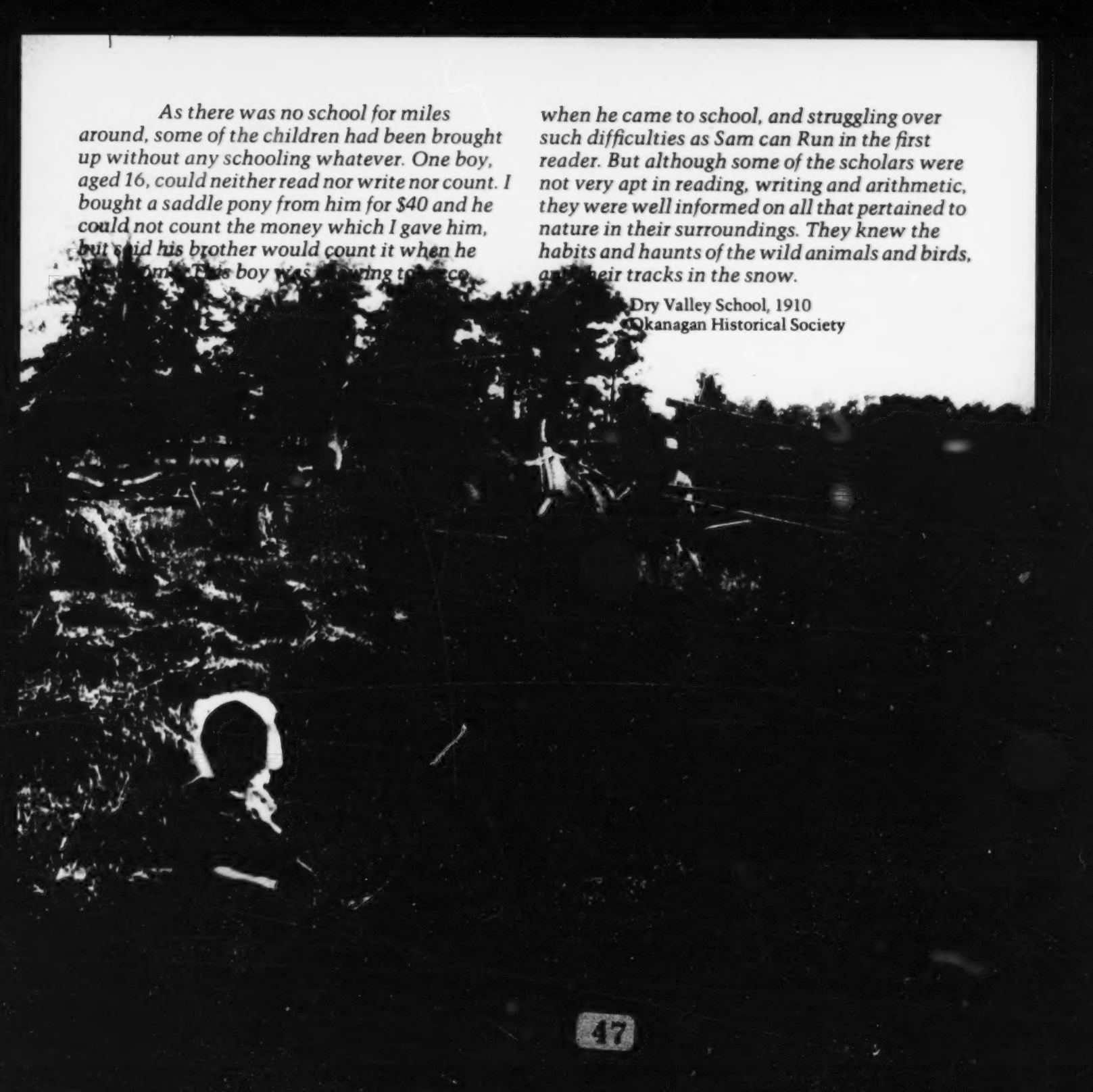


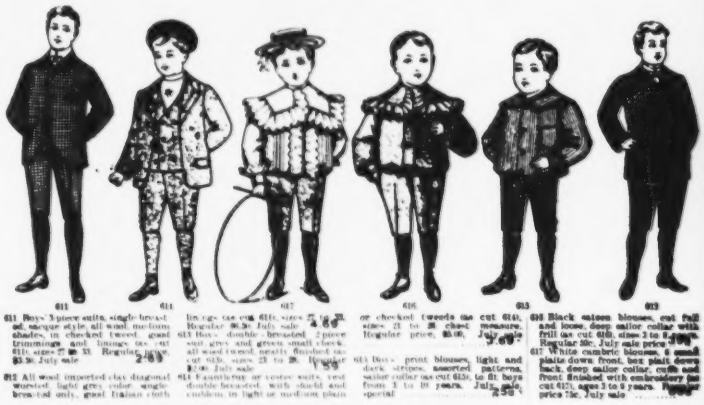
As there was no school for miles around, some of the children had been brought up without any schooling whatever. One boy, aged 16, could neither read nor write nor count. I bought a saddle pony from him for $40 and he could not count the money which I gave him, but said his brother would count it when he [illegible]. This boy was [illegible] to [illegible] when he came to school, and struggling over such difficulties as Sam can Run in the first reader. But although some of the scholars were not very apt in reading, writing and arithmetic, they were well informed on all that pertained to nature in their surroundings. They knew the habits and haunts of the wild animals and birds, and their tracks in the snow.

Dry Valley School, 1910
Okanagan Historical Society

I remember very well the long walk, nearly a mile, to and from the school. My fondest memory is of a pair of knee-high leather boots which grandfather had especially made for me. They had a red leather band around the top and metal toe caps to prevent me from kicking out the toes. I was very proud of those boots, although walking through the snow to school, my feet would get very cold, and also the darned things had to be oiled to waterproof them and keep them soft.

Student
Nova Scotia, 1890

Illustration from Second Reader, 1923



The distance travelled by the children varied; but some walked two and a half or three miles. Roads were rough, usually corduroy in the centre, with swamp and skunk cabbage on the side. In wet weather there were often wet feet, but the shoes were dried around the heater ready for the return home. All the land was not cleared, and there were strips of forest to go through. It was not unusual to see bears and often a mother with cubs during the summer.

East Chilliwack, B.C., 1905

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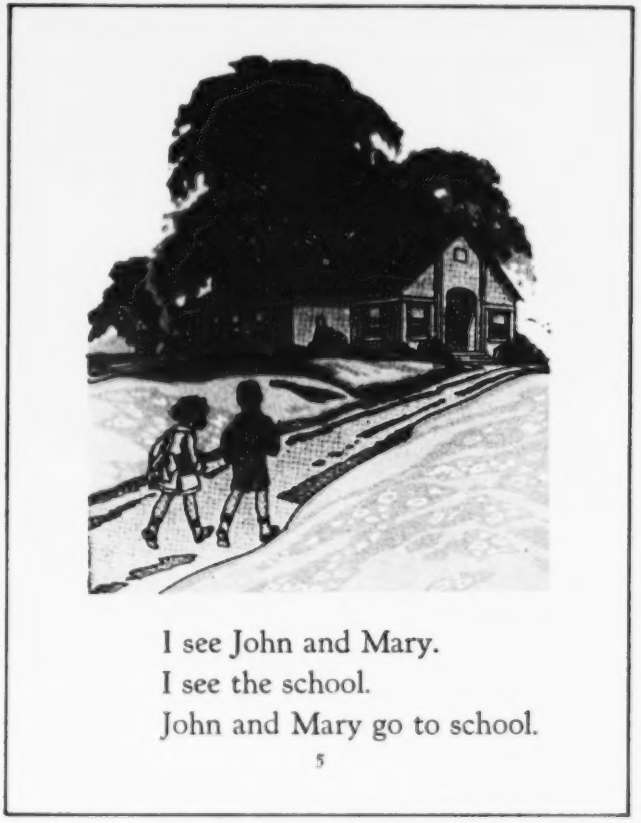
We went barefoot after the first dandelion until late fall. I remember my seat mate telling me to look under the seat to see all the bare legs and feet, and I knocked a loose tooth out when I bent down.

Prince Edward Island, 1911

The latest in fashion,
according to Eaton's Catalogue, 1907



Reading Primer, 1933

The important thing was the boots. I remember wearing knee-length rubber boots that laced up and that I kept on all day. You got them big enough to get two pairs of heavy socks in them. I remember one time I got my feet frozen, but people didn't make a fuss about that kind of thing. Doesn't everybody have 30 below zero to walk to school in? We wore what we called mackinaw pants of a heavy wool, and a woollen windbreaker usually in a big check pattern.

Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, 1935

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Enclosed "caboose" for winter travel near Montmartre, Saskatchewan

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Our school was 16 miles away. We lived in an area that had been hard hit by drought and dust, and a good many of the schoolhouses had been vacated.

Going to school was a community affair. In the winter we had a sleigh van with a pot-bellied stove inside to carry about 12 kids. Every once in a while it would tip, and you'd get burned or lose the dray. But no one was ever killed.

Saskatchewan, 1942

Ready for the four-and-a-half-mile drive to Allister School, Rivercourse, Alberta

Walfred Kajala relates how they drove a mule and a home-made cutter to school and lodged the mule in the woodshed during school hours. Invariably the mule chewed the ropes and wandered home by himself, leaving the children stranded. Their only recourse was to walk the five miles home and ride the mule back to school the next morning, hoping the incident wouldn't be repeated. Jennie May Woodmancy had a novel method of transportation to school, she rode in a sleigh pulled by a black and white dog, for her two and a half mile trip to school.

Melita School, Alberta
Schools of the Parkland

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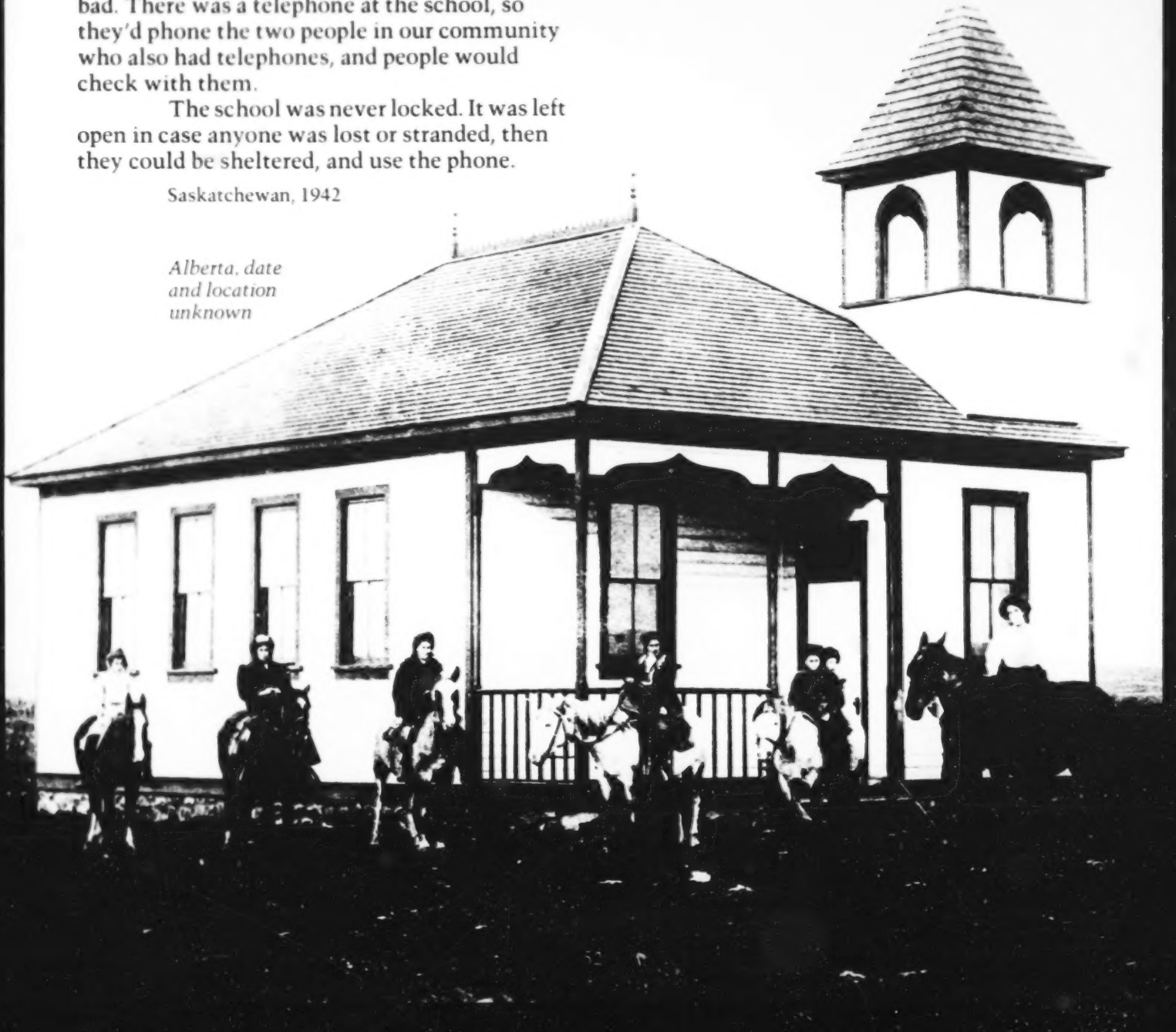
Our teacher's residence was at the school. If the weather was bad enough, you stayed, and she'd have food stores, so it wasn't bad. There was a telephone at the school, so they'd phone the two people in our community who also had telephones, and people would check with them.

The school was never locked. It was left open in case anyone was lost or stranded, then they could be sheltered, and use the phone.

Saskatchewan, 1942



Alberta, date and location unknown

There was a train track about six miles away. I can still hear the sound of the train, and the whistle. The whistle was one of the trademarks of the engineers, and we used to try to guess if it was the same engineer that went through last Tuesday. Even the teachers used to get into that.

The classroom in the summertime was like a zoo, with animals the kids would bring in, bees, a hornet's nest on the roof of the school. We grew accustomed to things flying through the room. If a special bird landed near the window, everyone stared at it until it flew away. The teacher didn't mind.

I slept through more classes on warm afternoons.

Sunkissed, Saskatchewan, 1942

"Bennett Buggy" hitched up for a drive to school, Grantham district, Alberta, 1940

Sod barn at Irwinville School Marwayne area, Alberta, about 1912

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Woodham School, Viking, Alberta, 1939

In one particular instance, three children rode their pony three and one half miles to school each day carrying their lunches, too, and any other incidentals. On this day they also toted a ten-pound Roger's Golden Syrup pail of crows' and magpies' eggs. Upon leaving home, the pail was full of whole eggs but after joggling along that distance the teacher was presented with approximately half a pail of scrambled eggs. Often the eggs were anything but fresh. The less said the better about the conditions of some of the feet and legs which were brought.

One can almost smell the day that a little lad brought his jam can filled with crow and magpie feet to collect his share of the bounty that the Fish and Game were offering to enterprising young people. The teacher, noticing the high odour, asked why they hadn't been brought in before and got the standard answer "I forgot." On opening the can the poor lady discovered not just the feet, but the entire bodies of the baby birds. A gallant lad came to her rescue and offered to take the can and contents down to the far end of the schoolyard, count the bodies and burn them.

Pine Hill District, Alberta, 1912
Schools of the Parkland

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Quebec, 1930s

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4 When the teacher rang the bell

the children lined up, boys at the boys' door, girls at the girls' door, grade one first, grade eight last. Then they marched in – in one school it was to the tune of Waltzing Matilda thumped out on the piano – and they kept on marching, all around the schoolroom until each child had stopped beside his own seat. In cold weather, they might circle the room a couple of times, to warm up the children and to try to circulate the glow from the stove into the cold corners.

Then there was a formal start to the day. Usually it began with the Lord's Prayer, and more than one teacher remembers her first day in front of a school when, young and green and terrified, she forgot the words. Then, facing the Union Jack and a portrait of England's reigning monarch, the class sang a national anthem or two, God Save the King, The Maple Leaf Forever or, latterly, O Canada. And for some there was a pledge of allegiance that went: "I pledge allegiance to our flag and the country for which it stands with liberty, equality and justice for all."

When work started, even with the best of teachers in the best-behaved school, the room was full of noises and the distinct possibility of confusion, as children in eight grades were put through their paces. To get to everyone and every subject, the teacher's presentations were usually only a few minutes long, and while she worked with one small class the rest of the children did

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seat work and consulted with older, wiser people in grade four or six, whom they were allowed to ask for help.

It all made for complicated organization that cost a lot of young teachers months of agonized trial and error. One gave up and took his fiddle to school. He kept the children dancing, until authority caught up with him and he was asked to find some other kind of job.

Country children are said to be independent, and they needed to be. Arithmetic, for instance, was demonstrated with a few examples. The children had books with pages of addition, subtraction and multiplication, and they worked at them until they could do them. The lucky ones had someone at home to help.

Rote learning was looked upon as a kind of mental muscle builder, and children memorized verses and multiplication tables, capital cities and the sources of rivers, dates of battles and the words in the speller.

An inspector in British Columbia, reporting in 1902, said, "If more were entrusted to the memory, there would be something to assimilate. There would be less dyspepsia and more muscle. Teachers and parents are over-considerate nowadays of the memory in children. In our apprehension lest pupils may turn out parrots, we have often turned out loons."

Even writing was taught by rote. Pupils spent hours making pot hooks and slanted lines. Only when they could produce these satisfactorily, did they join the squiggles to make letters. For years they did their practising on small, wooden-framed slates, with slate pencils that shrilled and squeaked, undoubtedly more than was necessary. Later they wrote with pens that dripped and blotted and served well as darts and ink blob launchers. Old desk tops attest to the staying power of the ink they used, made up in the early days in stone bottles from commercial preparations or from a potent home brew of maple bark, lamp black and iron sulphate.

The children recited separately and collectively in school, and they also pitted their memories against one another for the entertainment of the community. They took religion once a week in many schools, and competed to see who could find the books of the Bible fastest. Their spelling bees escalated from competition in the school, among several small schools, and finally to the big time, at the talent show against kids in the town schools.

During the nice weather, recess and lunchtime

gave the children a chance to run it off outdoors, and the teacher a chance to clear the air a little in the schoolroom and have a breather herself. For the days when the kids had to stay in the warmth of the classroom, a few lucky schools had games like Snakes and Ladders, checkers, crokinole, bought out of money raised at the Christmas concert or the fair. They played store with jelly boxes and Salada squares, which were aluminum tea boxes, and with the carefully hoarded wrapper from a rare treat like a candy bar.

Friday afternoon might bring home economics and manual training of sorts. Little girls practised the feather stitch and fine sewing on small pieces of cotton. Boys worked with a few hand tools and a vise clamped on to the end of a table to make book ends or small shelves. During the wars, the children knitted things like wash cloths and afghan squares.

But through it all, no one ever lost sight of the main scholastic event of the year, the all important entrance exam. Teachers say their careers depended on how

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well their students did on the grade eight high school entrance exam. For most of the students it was the only graduating exam they would write, the only certificate of achievement in school that they would get. Until the 1920s only about 15 to 20 percent of rural children went on to high school.

The problem was that rural children had to leave home and board in town to attend high school, and that was expensive. The best rural teachers tried to help interested kids, to give them a little schooling beyond grade eight. And many who weren't the best, whose own educational backgrounds were sketchy, were nontheless expected to teach high school subjects to adolescents who couldn't afford to go to town to school, but wanted a bit more education. In later years help was available from provincial extension departments, but it was usually an unsatisfactory arrangement for everyone.

Teachers also had to deal with children newly arrived in Canada, speaking neither English or French. When several families arrived at once to settle near each other, a teacher could suddenly have a dozen new students with whom she and her Canadian students couldn't communicate. The Prairies had little schools they called the Norwegian school or the Ukrainian school. Parents sometimes asked for teachers who could work in the children's mother tongue, as the law allowed for some years. In several provinces, most notably Manitoba, the disputes over regulations governing instruction in French or English made it possible for other language groups to get schooling in their mother tongues if they could muster the required number of children.

Few rural teachers in any province had any help in dealing with the difficulties of language and cultural change. The children usually just learned their new language and their new country by osmosis.

In northern Ontario, "The school was four miles from the railway, in the bush, no hydro, no telephone, no mail delivery, and no cars. It was shingled on the outside, and had been scorched by forest fires. I had 17 pupils, and only three spoke English. The others were Russian, Finnish and Polish.

"The inspector came the second week and told me to help them live in Canada, and to forget history, geography and science. We set up a house in one corner of the room, and a store in the other, using pictures, samples and crudely made furniture. It was a memorable year."

Sometimes, of course, there was prejudice. There is an old story from the Prairies of a black family that was included in a school section's head count so that the section would get its provincial school grant. But then the children were refused admission to the school. There's a 1928 account from British Columbia of a community voting unanimously not to let an Indian boy prepare for his entrance exam at their school.

Left to their own devices, though, the kids often got along, even when their elders didn't. There was a school in eastern Ontario where, shortly before World War One, the children came from a volatile mix of Orange and Irish backgrounds. There were one Roman Catholic and two Protestant trustees, and feelings ran so high that the teacher couldn't hang up a picture of Wilfrid Laurier. Prime minister or no prime minister, he was Catholic. But she says the children were friendly.

The rural system had other drawbacks. A child who was the only one in grade four might get overlooked. If teacher and child didn't like each other, they could be stuck with one another for years. There was no philosophy covering the special needs of children with disabilities, of the slow or extra bright or the children with special skills. Conscientious teachers did what they could, but they had little guidance and few resources to work with.

However, given a good school board and a good teacher, the country schools had advantages, too, and when people talk about them, they talk in terms of the importance of the individual and the feeling of community. "We learned to help each other. There was more personal contact, you got more attention and time from a teacher than you would ever get in a city school. You weren't just a student, you were part of his family. It's a marvellous memory for me, the community, the closeness, the warmth of feeling for land."

And there is a small joke that makes the rounds among teachers who remember their one-room-school days. It is to the effect that the open classroom concept is nothing new, and neither is the practice of moving a child through his lessons at his own pace, without rigid grade lines. That's the way a one-room school worked. A bright child could do his own work and "listen ahead" to the next grade's lessons. He could gobble up one part of the work and be moved on.

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Near Newcastle, New Brunswick, about 1895

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Savona Road School at Cherry Creek, Kamloops district, British Columbia, 1918

The daily procedure went something like this: At nine-thirty the pupils would be called in by the ringing of the bell. Opening exercises were Bible reading or recitation of Bible verses, and the repeating of the Lord's Prayer. (This was a United Church school). All Protestant schools had similar opening exercises. Then the work for the day would be assigned. Since every class had to read aloud the reading aloud lessons would be arranged so that while the Primers were reading all the rest would be working at Arithmetic, then while the Primers were doing some seatwork another class would read. Children who were brighter than the rest would often be allowed to help the little ones. Most of the time before recess at eleven o'clock would be taken up with arithmetic. From recess to dinner time at twelve-thirty would be grammar and writing with the classes arranged so that some more of the reading would be done. No teacher dared to neglect reading – and this was reading from the Reader – or English Literature.

Newfoundland, 1940

Alberta, 1892

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In the '30's we bought our books at the grocery store in the village five miles away. I think the first grade reader cost four cents. You'd get a pencil box, a package of wax crayons for five cents, some scribblers, and a drawing book of construction paper. The total would be about $1.75.

Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, 1935

34-434. Primary Metal Box of Water Color Paints. Contains 1 large cake each of blue, orange, black and red, in separate pans, and one brush. Box 2 x 8½ ins. Cover forms 3 mixing pans. **50c**

34-411. Our Big Value Scribbling or Work Books. Neat covers, good quality plain paper. Size of book 6 x 9¼ ins.
5 for 25c

STATIONERY

34-418. Combination Eraser, one end for ink, the other for lead pencil marks. Price.... **5c**

Good quality School Slates, with plain wooden frames.
34-454. Size 6 x 9.. **15c**
34-455. Size 7x11.. **20c**

Good quality School Slates with cloth-bound wooden frames. These frames will not scratch the desk and are quieter than slates with plain wooden frames.
34-456. Size 6 x 9.. **25c**
34-457. Size 7 x 11.. **30c**

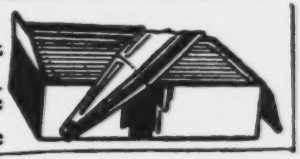
34-450. This is a reliable Pencil Sharpener with a sharp blade. Neat brass finish.. **20c**

School Outfit, of 26 Pieces Special Value, Complete **98c**

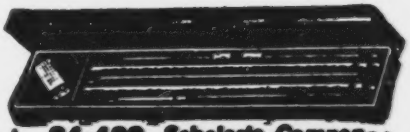
34-471. This outfit contains: brown fibreboard carrying case, (a strong case, size 12 x 9½ x 3½ ins., with leather handle), 4 scribblers, 4 pencil exercise books, 1 ink exercise book, 1 note book, 1 pad, 1 ruler, 4 lead pencils, 1 pencil sharpener, 1 eraser, 1 penholder and 6 pen points.
34-472. This outfit without carrying case. Price..... **50c**
34-473. Carrying Case, as described. Price..... **50c**

Slate Pencils

Good quality soft Slate Pencils.
34-448. 12 in box. Price..... **8c**
34-449. 100 in box. Price..... **35c**



34-459. Double Compartment Pencil Box.



34-439. Scholar's Companion. A neat cardboard box containing 4 lead pencils, 1 penholder, with nib and 1 eraser. Size of box 1½ x 9¼ ins. **25c**

School supplies available from the Eaton's catalogue, 1923

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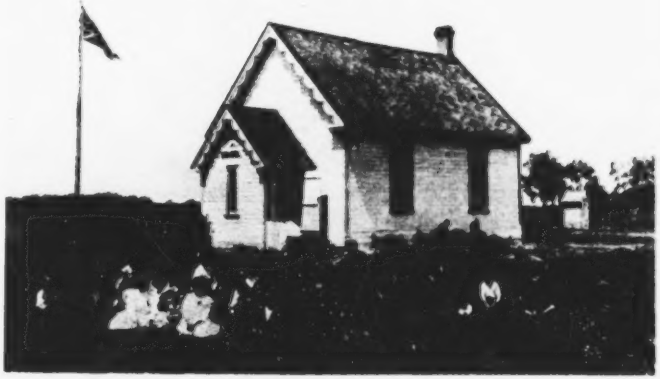
In public schools the whole day may profitably be devoted to special exercises. Suitable readings from the Scriptures, hymns and patriotic songs, readings or recitations by the pupils, lessons on the geography and the history of the British Empire, a lesson on the development and the significance of the flag – these are suggestions which will occur to the mind of every teacher.

Thus it is, though almost incredible, that there are men and women today in the cities, towns and townships and villages of Canada who will not take the trouble to go to the polls on election day. They grumble much but act little. Can such be called intelligent, patriotic Canadians? The right to vote cost British people of former times much struggle and much bloodshed, yet by many present-day citizens it is but lightly regarded. May there be none of the next generation who will not value the franchise highly and exercise it dutifully!

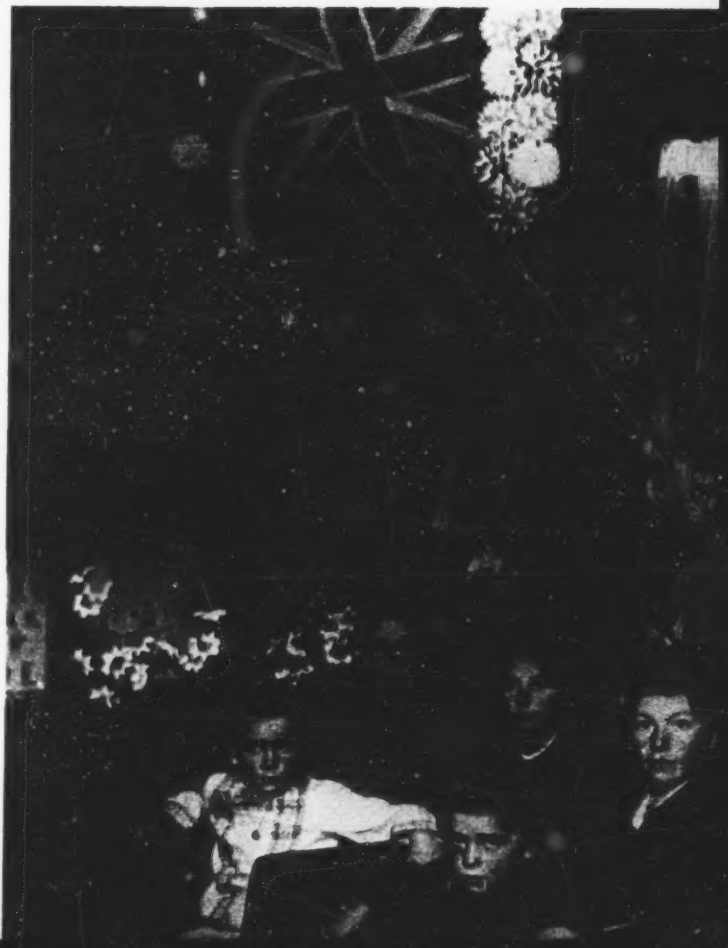
Victoria Day Program,
Ontario, 1920

We'd always have to draw Union Jacks and colour them, and the teacher would do a little talk about the Empire, and how Canada was part of it, and how good that was. I learned things like "England My England" and "O to be in England now that April's there!" It didn't occur to me to say, we're in Canada, so why are we learning this?

Ontario, 1925



Florence School, Manitoba, 1911



Harvey School,
near Vulcan, Alberta

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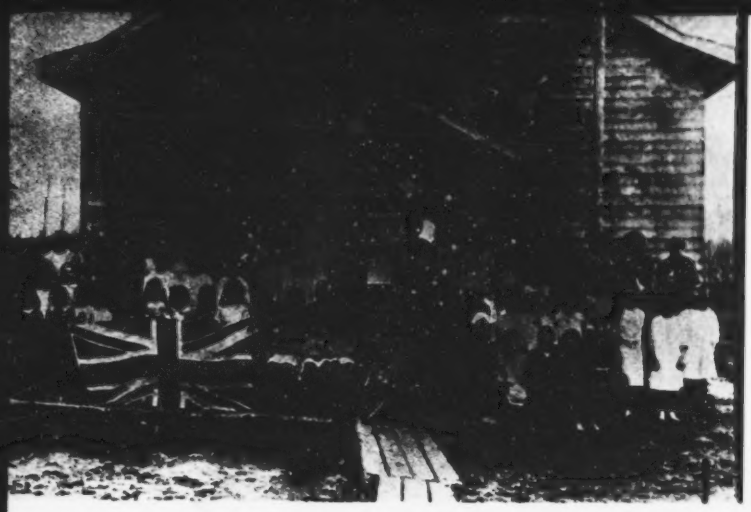

South Porcupine, Ontario, 1915

Kelowna had no telegraphic communication with the outside world, and the latest news would travel down the lake by means of the officers in the stern-wheeler, Aberdeen. News had been coming down this way of Queen Victoria's illness. As the boat pulled in on January 22, 1901, Mr. Sutherland put his head out of the high window and noticed the ship's flag at half-mast. The pupils remember him turning with a pale face and announcing to a hushed school, "The Queen is dead." It may be interesting to digress upon that same solemn hush that descended at intervals all around the Globe wherever flew the Union Jack, as though the people of the Empire and Dominions were aware not only of the passing of a great Queen, but of the end of a great and peaceful era. The solemnity of the moment, however, ended for Kelowna's first school children when Mr. Sutherland dismissed the school for the remainder of the day.

British Columbia, 1901

New Scotland, King Township, Ontario, 1911

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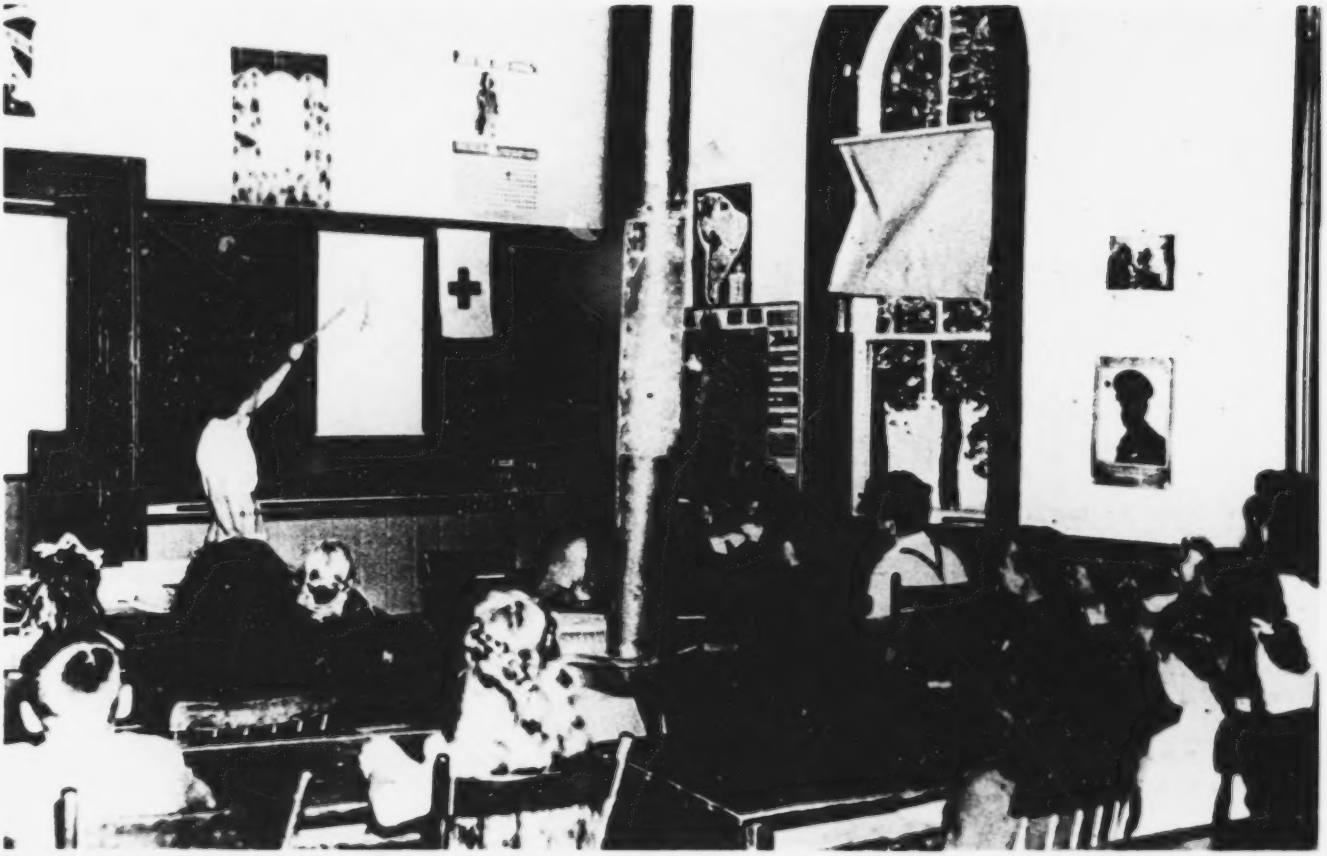

During World War Two, Ontario

Friday afternoon we did sewing, on factory cotton no bigger than a postcard. It had lines drawn on it, and we practiced the feather stitch and fine sewing. The boys sewed on Friday too. I remember being quite impressed with that. During the First World War, I remember knitting wash cloths out of string as war work.

Student
Ontario, 1918

When all contestants had been spelled down but three the excitement became most intense. The most rigid silence was observed and all eyes watched the scene as the words were pronounced and spelled alternately from side to side. Occasionally the whole vocabulary of the Spelling Book would be exhausted and neither party miss a word. Recourse would then be had to Walker's Dictionary, or the Bible for Scripture names, in order to break the tie.

Ontario, 1880

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Saskatchewan, 1954

Then we had home economics and manual training. My mother and sister used to save everything they could get their hands on, ribbon and thread and bits of wood, to use as materials.

We had a hammer, a saw, a chisel and a vise at the end of the table. We'd have little sales of things we made. And I'd go to Stratford to buy remnants to use for sewing.

Teacher
Ontario, 1940

Practically every school in the inspectorate had a Junior Red Cross Branch organized. These societies are doing splendid work in promoting better health habits and in bringing about improvements in school property. Their contribution to the war effort is also worthy of mention. The banner was awarded this year to Kildare South School.

Inspector's Report
Prince Edward Island, 1943

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JUNIOR RED CROSS
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Each of the courses was a separate entity with little relationship shown between them unless the teacher so arranged it. The usual timetable for – let us say a grade 8 student – was: Reading and literature, arithmetic, history, geography, physiology and hygiene, science, writing, art, music, civics, and citizenship, spelling, and library.

You can see at a glance that with that many courses for each grade and with eight or more grades for one teacher, classes were very short and were frequently combined; e.g. grades 7 and 8 took Physiology and Hygiene together but had different sets of questions written on the blackboard with a little more understanding expected of grade 8. I remember choosing springtime to study the geography of Alberta. We went out into the yard when the snow was nearly gone, scooped soft snow up into piles in appropriate places to provide us water sources, marked out our map of Alberta to rough scale, dug us river basins with a hoe, piled us mountains with a shovel, got melting snow to put water in our rivers, stuck spruce branches and twigs in where we needed "bushland," set little blocks for cities and towns. It was great fun but very mucky. And with such short class periods we had to use recess and noon hour and after-school time to get the whole thing complete before snow was all gone and dust reigned supreme.

Alberta, 1935
Clover and Wild Strawberries

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There was far too much homework for any teacher to be able to keep up with it all unless she worked out some weird system. For instance, when I put math on the blackboard, I so prepared the problems that I need not erase it all and put up new. I could make new problems for the next day by erasing a number here or there and substitute another. E.g., I would make a 1 into a 4 or a 9 or a 6 without even erasing. And then I need change it all only once a week – over the weekend. And before I put it on the board I would work it out in a scribbler with Monday's work in black. Then I'd use a coloured pencil (say red) to indicate Tuesday's changes and put down the answers for Tuesday in that colour, a green pencil for Wednesday's changes and Wednesday's answers in green, etc. During weekends, too, and during vacation periods, I worked out all the Reading and Literature questions and put them on rolls of store wrapping paper with each end fastened to a rounded stick. Then I'd simply roll on to the next section after I'd finished teaching my 10 minute lesson and the students would have that day's seatwork.

Alberta, 1938
Clover and Wild Strawberries

North Camp School,
Blackfoot Reserve,
near Gleichen, Alberta

I learned to read at home, and wrote my entrance exam when I was 11. I would get my work done then sit back and listen to the other grades going on ahead. It was usually more interesting than the stuff I was doing. By the time you'd get to the senior grades, you'd heard all the work three times.

Ontario, 1930s

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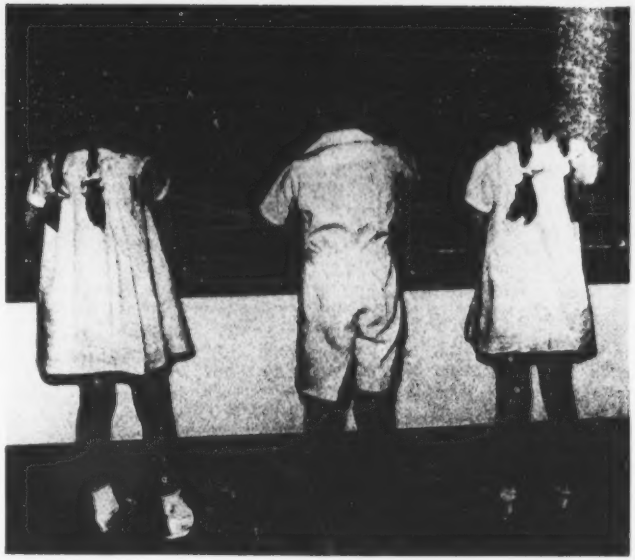
Simultaneous answering by the class is objectionable. To hear a class spelling a list of forty words three times each in loud, sing-song voices is the most unbearable school exercise conceivable.

Pupils should also stand to answer questions. They should really stand, not lean on the desk behind, nor on the half-raised seat. When the correct attitude has been assumed, there ought to be clearer thinking and better expression.

When a pupil who is asked to answer a question fails to do so, let him remain standing while one or more of the others are called upon to answer.

Ontario Teacher's Manual, 1915



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Dermal pain is far from being the pitiful evil the sentimental and neurasthenic adults regard it, and to flog wisely should not become a lost art.

In administering punishments, and especially corporal punishment, the teacher must bear in mind two things: first, that they must never be administered in anger; and secondly, that their frequency will be in proportion to the weakness of his management of the school.

Ontario Teacher's Manual, 1915

Another method of punishment (which he) practised to cure boys of fighting (which was then more prevalent than now) was to make them "cut jackets." The boys who had been breaking the rule in this respect were each required to take a beech rod about four feet long, as tough and limber as a whalebone whip, and standing about three feet apart were made to flog each other well, while the Teacher stood by with a similar rod in his hand, and if he saw that either boy was inclined to favour the other by lessening the force of his strokes, he would say, "Lay on harder, boys," and apply his own rod to the back of the delinquent. The cure was harsh but generally effectual.

The Establishment of Schools and Colleges in Ontario
J. George Hodgins

Bottom left:
Uno Park School, Timiskaming District, Ontario 1910-15

Eagle Creek School
District 1741, Saskatchewan

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British Columbia, 1940s

I taught arithmetic, I taught grammar, I taught spelling, and history, and geography and science, and if I taught Johnny and Mary and Peter, it was purely coincidental. My job depended on how well my pupils could recite upon the occasion of the inspector's visit and how well they did on their high school entrance examinations at the end of June.

On or about the 24th of May I divided my class into the sheep and the goats. I was sure that the sheep would pass and so they took their lessons from 9:00 to 4:00, but the goats came at 8:00 and we dr-i-l-l-ed spelling and grammar and arithmetic for an hour, and from 4:00 till 5:00 we drilled again. Of course, we called it review, but it was nothing short of cramming, and resembled the stuffing of a Christmas turkey. If I could pour enough facts into their heads and they could hold those facts long enough to regurgitate them on the examination I had achieved my purpose.

Teacher
Ontario, 1937

Quinn, Kent Country, Ontario, 1946

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Whalen Corners, Ontario, 1940

If I had understood child growth and development, I could have helped the children more. For instance, I had a mental retardate in my first school, and didn't know how to work with him.

And at the school fair, when agricultural representatives came to judge, the children were given marks on everything, and some kids won all the time. I didn't know enough to give a kid credit for accomplishment. We didn't know anything about how to show their improvement.

I had a boy in senior fourth who didn't make his entrance, but he had a wonderful hand with flowers. If I had just known then that there are many other things than book learning.

Teacher
Peterborough, Ontario, 1938

Manitoba, 1950s

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Readers weren't just readers

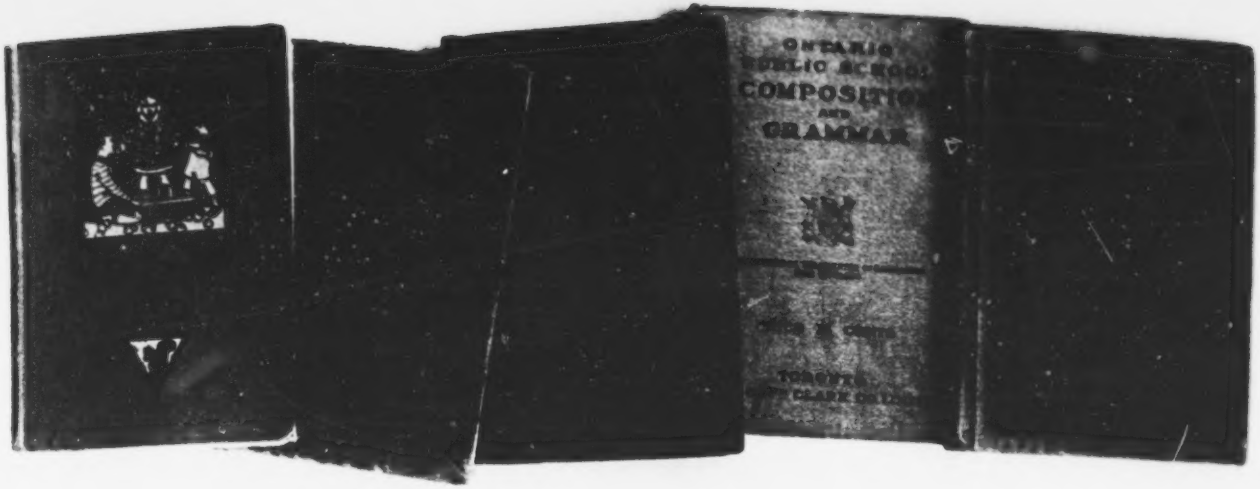
at a country school, they were the yardsticks the children grew by. A child might be in Junior One or Senior Fourth, but he was also in the First or Fourth Reader.

Most Canadians who used the old Readers remember them fondly. If there were Dick and Jane, there were also Aesop's and La Fontaine's fables, Bible stories, Tennyson, Bliss Carmen, Robert Louis Stevenson, Mark Twain and Ernest Thompson Seton. Here was all the fantasy and heroism a child could dream of, and for some rural children the charm would have been all the greater because other books were scarce.

The preface to one of the Canadian Catholic Readers approved in Ontario in 1899 establishes two goals, the lofty and the practical: "It affords us pleasure to present to the Catholic schools the last and highest of the new series of Readers. The great aim in preparing the Fourth Book has been to give pupils an introduction to a goodly array of the best modern English writers. We trust that these selections will induce our young people to taste more deeply of many of these 'wells of English undefiled.'

"For the Entrance Examination to High Schools an alternative paper in Literature will be set on selections from this Fourth Reader."

When the school systems were just getting underway, teachers used whatever books they could get. And as proof that some things never change, there is much



concern expressed in early reports about the insidious influence of American books in the classroom.

When Egerton Ryerson began the standardization of textbooks, he started with the introduction of the Irish National Series to be authorized by the Council of Public Instruction for Upper Canada. They set the pattern. They were divided into sections, subdivided by prose and verse. The third book included Fables, Natural History, Religious and Moral Lessons and Geography. The old texts are interesting because they mirror the life and attitudes of their times. For instance, the 1864 Irish Reader ends a description of the exploration of the Niger River with this musing: "The practical results of this discovery have yet to be learned; but it is probable that it will present new scenes and objects for commercial enterprise, and it is certain that it will open an almost unbounded field for Christian philanthropy and missionary zeal."

People with axes to grind have always been delighted if they could get into the nation's classrooms, and school books also reflect the rise and fall of causes and social issues. Around the turn of the century, for example temperance forces were active, gathering strength for the drive that would eventually bring on prohibition. In 1893 Ontario issued Public School Physiology and Temperance, full of warnings about alcohol, tobacco and drugs.

When the exodus from country to city became severe enough to be recognized as rural depopulation, education and agriculture ministries pitched in to sell farm life to farm children. Rural textbooks offered advice on good farming procedures, as in a chapter on Clean Home Milk, suggesting that milk for family use be strained and otherwise handled carefully. It provided instruction on bacteria, on the wild plants that grow along country roads, on the birds to be seen in field and forest. It had accounts of hoeing contests and a raccoon hunt, all attempts to make farm life seem exciting to children.

Most children, or at least most families, owned readers, which were sold for a few cents. For many years the T. Eaton Company printed some of them, and sold them through their catalogues. Beyond that, the book supply in a country school depended as much as anything else did on the money and interest available. If there were books and games beyond the necessities it was usually because the community raised money to buy them, in some cases to give to the children as prizes for doing well in class or winning contests.

The schools were supposed to have libraries, but sometimes had to be bullied by the inspector into providing them. Departments of education had lists of books that they recommended both for libraries and prize giving.

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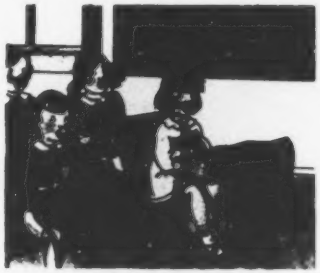
I am Mary.
I go to school.

4

John said,
"I like school.
I can read in school."

Mary said,
"I like school.
I can read in school."

6



John can read in school.
Mary can read, too.

John can sing in school.
Mary can sing, too.

Mary can draw in school.
John can draw, too.

7

Primer, 1933

122 NATIONAL SERIES OF SCHOOL BOOKS.

H. But what a fine thing it would be to find a gold mine on one's estate.

T. Perhaps not so fine as you imagine; for many a mine does not pay the cost of working. A coal-pit would probably be a better thing. Who do you think are the greatest gold-finders in Europe?

H. I don't know.

T. The gipsies in Hungary. A number of half-starved, half-naked wretches of that community employ themselves in washing and picking the sands of some mountain-streams which contain gold, from which they obtain just profit enough to keep them alive; whereas, were they to employ themselves in agriculture or manufactures, they might perhaps earn a comfortable subsistence.

G. In what part of the world was gold first discovered?

T. Probably in some of the countries of Western Asia; for we may infer from Genesis ii. 11, 12, that it was either found in the sands of one of the rivers which watered the garden of Eden, or dug from mines in the surrounding country.

G. Gold is very often spoken of in the Bible.

T. It is; and I think I cannot conclude this lesson better than by explaining some of the passages in which it is mentioned. We read in the books of Moses that great quantities of it were used in making the sacred vessels. David, as we learn from 1 Chron. xxii. 14, had prepared for building the temple no less than a hundred thou-

THIRD BOOK. 123

sand talents of gold, which was perhaps equal in value to five hundred millions of our money. A great part of Solomon's wealth consisted in the quantity of gold which he possessed. We are told in 1 Kings x. 14, that "the weight of gold which came to him in one year was six hundred and sixty-six talents (nearly two and a half millions), besides what he had of the merchantmen, and of the traffic of the spice merchants, and of all the kings of Arabia, and of the governors of the country." Gold is employed by the inspired writers as a figure of speech to illustrate the value of spiritual gifts. "Wisdom cannot be gotten for gold," says Job. The Psalmist affirms that God's commandments are "more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold." Peter tells us, that "the trial of our faith is much more precious than gold, though it be tried with fire." And in the book of Revelation, we are informed that St. John was instructed to say to the church of Laodicea: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich." Gold stands for all earthly riches; as when Job, protesting his integrity, says, "If I made gold my hope, or said unto the fine gold, Thou art my confidence, &c., this were an iniquity to be punished by the judge." And it is taken, when united with the idea of a crown, to represent prosperity, honour, and happiness; as when the Psalmist says, in offering thanksgiving for a victory, (Psa. xxi.) "Thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head." And the elders that are spoken of in the book of

1864

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part of a leaf, long and narrow, with rather jagged edges.

Now the tea-leaves look very unlike the tea that came from the grocer's; that was hard and crisp and black. But how did it get to look like that? What did the Chinaman do to it?

In April, when the leaves are ready to be picked, the Chinaman and his wife and children go out into their garden, and pick the first young leaves off the tea-plants. These make the very best tea; and they will get most money for it.

In May, a fresh crop of leaves shoots out, and the busy Chinaman, with his small, funny-looking black eyes, and long pigtail hanging down his back, sets to work again and picks these.

1884

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LESSON II.

THE IDLE BOY.

"WHEN I was a boy at school," said an old man, "I was often very idle. Even while at my lessons, I used to play with other boys as idle as myself. Of course we tried to hide this from the teacher, but one day we were fairly caught.

"'Boys,' said he, 'you must not be idle. You must keep your eyes on your lessons. You do not know what you lose by being idle. Now, while you are young, is the time to learn. Let

any one of you, who sees another boy looking off his book, come and tell me.'

"'Now,' said I to myself, 'There is Fred Smith. I do not like him. I will watch him, and if I see him looking off his book I will tell.'

"Not very long after, I saw Fred looking off his book, so I went up and told the teacher.

"'Aha!' said he, 'how do you know he was idle?'

"'Please, sir,' said I, 'I saw him.'

"'O you did, did you? And where were your eyes when you saw him? Were they on your book?'

"I was fairly caught. I saw the other boys laugh, and I hung my head, while the teacher smiled. It was a good lesson for me. I did not watch for idle boys again."

Word Review.

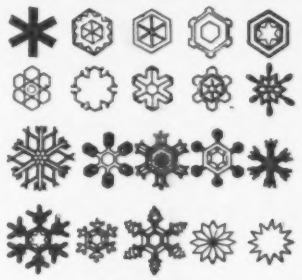
I'dle	young	learn	laugh (*laf*)
lose	school	watch	teach'er

Phrase Review.

1. While at *my* lessons.—2. Of course.—3. We were *fairly* caught.—4. Where were *your* eyes?—5. A good lesson for me.

All that you do, do with your might;
Things done by halves, are never done right.

1884



LESSON XLIV.

SHAPES OF SNOW-FLAKES.

"O, FATHER!" said Ethel, as Mr. Ray came in to tea one winter evening; "your coat is covered with snow. I will brush it off for you." So Ethel hurried to get the brush, and soon her little hands were at work, though she had to stand on tip-toe to reach her father's shoulder.

"Why, father, this flake is shaped just like a

1884

Another crop comes in June, and still another in August. But this last is the coarsest and poorest of all, and will bring very little money.

When the leaves are picked, they are dried slightly in the sun, in flat baskets; then they are dried again in metal pans, over a gentle fire. Afterwards, they are poured out upon a table, and the Chinaman rolls them, with his long, dark fingers, into the little black grains, which the grocer sells us.

The tea is packed in boxes, that have been lined with lead-paper; the boxes are sent down to the sea-coast, and away they are carried in swift ships, to all the countries of the world.

The next time you are in the grocer's shop, perhaps the shopman will be kind enough to show you a Chinese tea-chest. The outside is covered by a bright, many-colored pattern, and the chest is quite unlike what a Canadian carpenter would turn out of his workshop.

Word Review.

ouf'lox	busy	sugar	juice
co-ax (*ko'ks*)	gro'cer	mil'ers	bas'kets
easily	Au'gust	pat'tern	coars'est
Chi'na	Chi-nese'	Ca-na'di-an	pleasant

Phrase Review.

1. Jagged edges.—2. *Fresh* crop.—3. Dried *slightly*.—4. *Gentle* fire.—5. Kind enough.—6. Would *turn* out.

Where the old shoe rocked the fishermen three:
Wynken, Blynken, and Nod.

EUGENE FIELD

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

A gentleman once advertised for a boy to assist him in his office, and nearly fifty applied for the place. Out of the whole number, he in a short time chose one and sent all the rest away.

"I should like to know," said a friend, "on what ground you chose that boy. He had not a single recommendation with him."

"You are wrong," said the gentleman; "he had a great many.

"He wiped his feet when he came in and closed the door after him, showing that he was orderly and tidy.

"He gave up his seat instantly to that lame old man, showing that he was kind and considerate.

"He took off his cap when he came in and answered my questions promptly and

1923

respectfully, showing that he was polite.

"He lifted up the book which I had purposely laid on the floor and placed it on the table, showing that he was careful.

"And he waited quietly for his turn, instead of pushing the others aside, showing that he was modest.

"When talking to him, I noticed that his clothes were carefully brushed, his hair was in nice order, and his teeth were as white as milk. When he wrote his name, I observed that his finger-nails were clean, instead of being tipped with jet.

"Don't you call all these things recommendations? I do; and they are worth more than all the fine letters of recommendation a boy can bring me."

For flowers that bloom about our feet;
For tender grass so fresh, so sweet;
For song of bird and hum of bee;
For all things fair we hear or see,
Father in Heaven, we thank thee!

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Our Flag
Our Fleet
Our Throne

The Union Jack

THE ONTARIO READERS

THIRD BOOK

AUTHORIZED BY
THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION

PRICE 14 CENTS

TORONTO
T EATON CO

1936

THE MAPLE

All hail to the broad-leaved Maple!
With her fair and changeful dress—
A type of our youthful country
In its pride and loveliness;
Whether in Spring or Summer,
Or in the dreary Fall,
Mid Nature's forest children,
She's fairest of them all.

Down sunny slopes and valleys
Her graceful form is seen,
Her wide, umbrageous branches
The sunburnt reaper screen;
Mid the dark-browed firs and cedars
Her livelier colours shine,
Like the dawn of the brighter future
On the settler's hut of pine.

She crowns the pleasant hilltop,
Whispers on breezy downs,
And casts refreshing shadows
O'er the streets of our busy towns;
She gladdens the aching eyeball,
Shelters the weary head,
And scatters her crimson glories
On the graves of the silent dead.

THE PASSENGER PIGEON

(This bird has not been seen for many years.)

The passenger pigeon, or, as it is usually named in America, the wild pigeon, moves with great rapidity, propelling itself by quickly repeated flaps of the wings, which it brings more or less near to the body according to the degree of swiftness which is required.

Its great power of flight enables it to pass over an astonishing space in a very short time. This is proved by facts well known in America. Thus, pigeons have been killed in the neighbourhood of New York, with their crops full of rice which they must have collected in the fields of Georgia and Carolina, those districts being the nearest in which they could possibly have procured a supply of that kind of food. As they can digest food entirely in twelve hours, they must, in this case, have travelled between three hundred and four hundred miles in six hours, which shows their speed to be an average of about one mile a minute. A speed such as this would enable one of these birds, were it so inclined, to visit the European continent in less than three days.

They have also great power of vision, which enables them, as they travel at that swift rate, to

suppose it passing over us without interruption for three hours at the rate mentioned above of one mile a minute. Allowing two pigeons to the square yard, we have one billion, one hundred and fifteen millions, one hundred and thirty-six thousand pigeons in one flock. As every pigeon daily consumes half a pint of food, the quantity necessary for supplying this vast multitude must be eight millions, seven hundred and twelve thousand bushels a day.

Audubon

THE ATHABASKA TRAIL

I have crossed the inland ocean, lying golden
in the sun,
But the last and best and sweetest is the ride
by hill and dale,
With the packer and the pack-horse on the
Athabaska trail!
I'll dream again of fields of grain that stretch
from sky to sky,
And the little prairie hamlets where the cars
go rolling by,
Wooden hamlets as I saw them—noble cities
still to be,
To girdle stately Canada with gems from sea
to sea.

Mother of a mighty manhood, Land of glam-
our and of hope,
From the eastward sea-swept islands to the
distant Western slope,
Ever more my heart is with you, ever more till
life shall fail,
I'll be out with pack and packer on the Atha-
baska trail!

Sir A. Conan Doyle
By permission of the Author.

BURIAL OF SIR JOHN MOORE

Nor a drum was heard, not a funeral note,
As his corpse to the rampart we hurried;
Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot
O'er the grave where our hero we buried.

We buried him darkly at dead of night,
The sods with our bayonets turning;
By the struggling moon-beam's misty light,
And the lantern dimly burning.

No useless coffin inclosed his breast,
Nor in sheet nor in shroud we wound him;
But he lay like a warrior taking his rest,
With his martial cloak around him.

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Then hail to the broad-leaved Maple!
With her fair and changeful dress—
A type of our youthful country
In its pride and loveliness;
Whether in Spring or Summer,
Or in the dreary Fall,
'Mid Nature's forest children,
She's fairest of them all.

H. F. Darnell.

CHARITY

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly,

A SONG OF CANADA

Sing me a song of the great Dominion!
Soul-felt words for a patriot's ear!
Ring out boldly the well-turned measure,
Voicing your notes that the world may hear;
Here is no starveling—Heaven-forsaken—
Shrinking aside where the Nations throng;
Proud as the proudest moves she among them—
Worthy is she of a noble song!

Sing me the might of her giant mountains,
Baring their brows in the dazzling blue;
Changeless alone, where all else changes,
Emblems of all that is grand and true:
Free, as the eagles around them soaring;
Fair, as they rose from their Maker's hand;
Shout, till the snow-caps catch the chorus—
The white-topp'd peaks of our mountain land!

Sing me the calm of her tranquil forests,
Silence eternal, and peace profound,
In whose great heart's deep recesses
Breaks no tempest, and comes no sound;
Face to face with the deathlike stillness,
Here, if at all, man's soul might quail:
Nay! 'tis the love of that great peace leads us
Thither, where solace will never fail!

Sing me the worth of each Canadian,
Roamer in wilderness—toiler in town—
Search earth over you'll find none stancher,
Whether his hands be white or brown;
Come of a right good stock to start with,
Best of the world's blood in each vein;
Lords of ourselves, and slaves to no one,
For us or from us, you'll find we're—MEN!

Sing me the song, then; sing it bravely;
Put your soul in the words you sing;
Sing me the praise of this glorious country—
Clear on the ear let the deep notes ring.
Here is no starveling—Heaven-forsaken—
Crouching apart where the Nations throng;
Proud as the proudest moves she among them—
Well is she worthy a noble song!

Robert Reid

A PIONEER'S WIFE

(Extract, Chapleauton, a Quebec pioneer, in speaking of his wife Laura, a day or two after her death.)

"When we took up our first land at Normandin, we had two cows and very little pasture for them, as nearly all our lot was in standing timber and very hard for the plough. As for me, I picked up my axe, and I said to her: 'Laura, I am go-

THE CANADIAN

I never saw the cliffs of snow,
The Channel billows tipped with cream,
The restless, eddying tides that flow
About the Island of my dream.
I never saw the English downs
Upon an April day,
The quiet, old Cathedral towns,
The hedgerows white with may.

And still the name of England,
Which tyrants laugh to scorn
Can thrill my soul. It is to me
A very bugle-horn.

A thousand leagues from Plymouth shore,
In broader lands I saw the light.
I never heard the cannon roar
Or saw a mark of England's might;
Save that my people lived in peace,
Bronzed in the harvest sun,
And thought that tyranny would cease,
That battle-days were done.

And still the flag of England
Streamed on a friendly breeze,
And twice two hundred ships of war
Went surging through the seas.

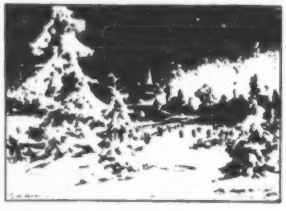
I heard Polonius declaim
About the new, the golden age,
When Force would be the mark of shame,
And men would curb their murderous rage.
"Beat out your swords to pruning-hooks,"
He shouted to the folk.
But I—I read my history books
And marvelled as he spoke.

For it was glorious England,
The mother of the Free,
Who loured that foolish tongue, but sent
Her Admirals to sea.

And liberty and love were ours,
Home, and a brood of lusty sons,
The long, North sunlight, and the flowers.
How could we think about the guns,
The searchlights on a wintry cloud,
The seamen, stern and bold,
Since we were hurrying with the crowd
To rake the hills for gold?

But it was glorious England
Who scanned the threatening morn.
To me the very name of her
Is like a bugle-horn.

J. E. Middleton



CHRISTMAS SONG

Above the weary waiting world,
Asleep in chill despair,
There breaks a sound of joyous bells
Upon the frosted air.
And o'er the humblest roof-tree, lo!
A star is dancing on the snow.

What makes the yellow star to dance
Upon the brink of night?
What makes the morning dawn to glow
So magically bright,—
And all the earth to be renewed
With infinite beatitude?

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Lesson IX.

Will you have a plum? That pale dove not stand plaint Exercise opens every pore of the skin. Please to pour me a glass of water. Do not pore over your books so much. The *Principal* said, "Our sons of principle should be our principal men." Put your foot upon the *pedal*. Those who peddle make a good *profit*. Isaiah was a great *prophet*. I have a piece of *pumice*-stone. There is pressure at the cider mill. Gold is found in quartz rock. Four quarts make a gallon. He drives with a tight *rein*. Hear it *rein*. The *reign* of Victoria is prosperous. To tear down is to *rent*. My cousin says, "We cannot raise corn without the rays of the sun." He read till his eyes were *red*. In the Bible we read of a broaad *road*.

Lesson X.

Write to the wheelwright. Do *right*. The pastor administered the *rite* of baptism. Milton wrote "Paradise Lost." Do not smoke by *rote*. The sweated got sick and began to *retch*. Forty rods make a *rood*. Do not be rude and rough in your behavior. She wears a *ruff*. He toasted the *rye* bread and made a soy fuss. I have just seen a beautiful *scene*. I bought canvas at a sale to make a *sail* for the boat. He made a *slight* mistake in his *sleight* of hand. The wild *surge* wrecked the boat. Buy me ten yards of *serge*. *Sew* the seam *so*. Sow the seed early. He tried to *steal* a *steel* pen. He has lost the *sole* of his shoe. The *soul* is immortal.

Lesson XI.

The ship is a fast *sailer*, and has a good sailor for captain. The fisherman caught a *sailor*. Always succor the distressed. Irving's style is much admired. "I'm voting

on the side, Mary." The cross and crown are carved symbols. He plays the *cymbals* in the band. The fish is too true. The squirrel has a bushy *tail*. I went some *ti*me to-day. I got my hair when I *travel* in Europe. The *thieves* of *Ireland* are aware. The lad hey *thieves* stones at the birds. He threw the ball *through* the window. It is too bad to make you mistakes in one word. They went *there* and got *their* books. The *throne* was *thrown* down. "They went and *told* the written, and the written *told* the ball."

Lesson XII.

Improve your time. Thyme grows in the garden. There is a gilded vane on the steeple. He has registered a vein. Do not be weak of your acquaintance's. The mad mustang poisoned. He plays upon the *reed*. Can you wade across the river? Come this way. *Weed* till I get *weighed*. How much do you *weigh*? My *weight* is 180 lbs. That girl has a small *waist*. Do not waste your time. He keeps good *watch*. She sewed a dress a week. I feel weak. The settler walked during the cold *weather*. The pain is all *wasted*. I *would* like to have the pail of an egg. Long may our flag *wave* o'er the ocean *wave*. I waive my right to exemption.

Review.

If you should e'er have to submit to the ordeal of a searching examination in English orth-ography, you should ere guess up make yourself thoroughly acquainted with an air of confidence and an heir at law, your Aunt Hill and the anthill on the organ, a hoe-cake and a gambler's stake, an obscure or hereditary poor and a stone pier, tears of joy and tiers of oars, beer for the living and a bier for the dead, the hues of

1901

you wish to write in your letters, be sure to ask somebody to spell them for you. You should take very great care to spell every word correctly in letters as well as in all other writing.

In your work for the week throughout the year, you will be given a number of exercises. Do these very carefully each week.

During this year you will be asked to study your words by yourself. In doing this you should take six steps. Do each step carefully, and you will learn to spell more easily.

HOW TO STUDY A WORD BY YOURSELF

1. Look at the word. Say it plainly but softly to yourself. Think what it means.
2. While looking at the word, say it once and say the letters three times softly, as, *sun, s u n, s u n, s u n.*
3. Close your eyes and say the letters softly.
4. Without looking at the blackboard, write the word on your paper.
5. Look at the blackboard to see if you have written the word correctly.
6. If it is not correct, do the first five steps over again.

During the year you will also find that some of your words are in sentences. You should learn, therefore, how to study a sentence. There are five steps. Do each step carefully, and you will learn to write a sentence more easily.

HOW TO STUDY A SENTENCE BY YOURSELF

1. Read the sentence through carefully.
2. Note the hard words and study them.
3. Without looking at the sentence, say it to yourself.
4. Write the sentence.
5. Compare with the blackboard to see if you have written it correctly.

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inverted. This unusual order attracts attention and gives emphasis to the part taking an unusual place.

EXERCISE II.—Re-write the following sentences, improving the emphasis of emphatic parts by inversion: (1) The help of man is vain. (2) The work went on day after day. (3) The matter with which this class of novel deals is dangerous. (4) Elisa cried, "What a pretty box! Did you bring it for me all this distance? You are too good to me." (5) They did not cease to be friends, though they became rivals. (6) He that hath his quarrel just is thrice armed. (7) "It might have been," are the saddest of all words of pen or tongue. (8) The house was adorned without with beautiful creeping vines, and had fine paintings and statues within. (9) I trust that when you come next, I shall see you. (10) I do not love thee, Doctor Fell; I cannot tell the reason why; but I know full well this alone, I do not love thee, Doctor Fell.

REPRODUCTION.—Draw up a formal outline of the story of Daulac; tell the story in your own words.

COMPOSITION 1.—The Heroine of "Castle Dangerous."

OUTLINE.—"Castle Dangerous," its blockhouse—Madeleine Verchères (*her state*), aged fourteen, left in charge—Walks by the river to meet expected visitors—Sees some Iroquois coming—Calls the fort, shouting, "*Aux armes! (Aux armes!) Aux armes!*"—Inmates stupefied with fear—She takes command, looks to the defences, inspires her two little brothers with her own brave spirit—Her visitors are SEEN approaching—She goes out herself to warn them—The Indians, fearing a trap, do not molest her—She brings her friends safely into the fort—Posts her guard—Holds the fort for a week—Sleeps little, her head resting on her arms folded over her gun—Word of her need taken to Montreal by labourers who had escaped the Indians—Splashing of paddles heard—Voices speaking French—The rescue party—The Indians depart.

COMPOSITION 2.—Tell the story of Napoleon and the Sentry.

Use the details in the picture above. The sentry is forgiven because of the recent hardships and great victories of the army, but...

COMPOSITION 3.—The Capture of Quebec.

ADDITIONAL THEMES.

COMPOSITION.—1. The Battle of Hastings. 2. The Battle of Crecy. 3. The Defeat of the Armada. 4. The Charge of the Light Brigade. 5. William Wallace. 6. Bruce and the Spider. 7. The Heart of the Bruce. 8. William Tell. 9. Joan of Arc. 10. The Fall of the Bastille. 11. The Death of the Swiss Guards. 12. The Discovery of America. 13. The Conquest of Mexico by Cortez. 14. Jacques Cartier. 15. The Massacre of the Priests of the Huron Mission. 16. The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers. 17. The Discovery of the Mississippi. 18. The Outbreak of the American Revolution. 19. Barbara Frietchie. 20. Laura Secord. 21. The Battle of Queenston Heights. 22. The Relief of Ladysmith. 23. The Defence of Mafeking.

1902

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(3) Can you *guess* the number of beans in the jar?
I *think* that you are right.

Guess means to form an opinion on uncertain knowledge; *think*, to believe, or to consider.

(4) He *is lying* on the ground.
He *lays* the book on the table.

Lie means to recline; *lay*, to put, or to place.

(5) He *learned* his lesson.
He *taught* me to swim.

Learn means to receive instruction; *teach*, to give instruction.

(6) *May* I have the book?
Can you lift that stone?

May denotes permission; *can*, ability.

(7) They *rise* early.
They *raise* the table.

Rise means to get up; *raise*, to lift up.

(8) He *is sitting* down.
He *sets* the lamp on the table.

Sit means to rest, to occupy a seat; *set*, to put, or to place.

(9) He *stays* here a month.
He *stops* in front of the school.

Stay, means to remain; *stop*, to cease from motion.

2. Tell which of the words suggested you would use in the following sentences and why: (1) Go and (bring, fetch) me some water. (2) He (learned, taught) me to read. (3) The enemy (fire, fir) across the river. (4) I can't (rise, raise). (5) He has (laid, lain) down. (6) The hen was (sitting, setting) on the nest. (7) I am (stopping, staying) ten days here. (8) I (guess, think) that he is telling the truth.

1920

FIRST WEEK

ball	girl	stove	car
school	hat	boy	horse

Look at the words above.

Find a word which tells what this is.

Find a word which tells what this is.

Find words which tell what these are.

Your teacher will write all your words for this week one by one on the blackboard.

Watch her closely as she writes.

Now you write each word on your paper.

Look again at the blackboard to see if you have the word correct on your paper. Then study the word in the way that you are told to study a word on page 3.

Which is the longest of your words?

1936

TWENTY-FIFTH WEEK

Dominion of Canada		Ottawa
British Columbia	B. C.	Victoria
Alberta	ALTA.	Edmonton
Saskatchewan	Sask.	Regina
Manitoba	Man.	Winnipeg
Ontario	Ont.	Toronto
Quebec	P. Q.	Quebec
New Brunswick	N. B.	Fredericton
Nova Scotia	N. S.	Halifax
Prince Edward Island	P.E.I.	Charlottetown

DICTATION.—

1. The capital of the Dominion of Canada is ———.
2. I live in the province of ———. The capital of my province is ———.

TWENTY-SIXTH WEEK

Great Britain	England	Scotland
Ireland	Wales	Irish Free State
Australia	New Zealand	India
South Africa	Newfoundland	British Empire
Vancouver	Montreal	Shawinigan Falls
Saint John	Boy Scouts	Red Cross
League of Nations		Daughters of the Empire

SUPPLEMENTARY WORDS.—Write the names of ten of the most important cities and towns in your province. Learn them for your test on Friday.

1936

Review 3

Peterborough, Ont., June 13, 1936.

Smith, Wilson & Co.,
324 Lenore St.,
Windsor, Ont.

Dear Sirs,

On the 31st of last month I sent you an order for five copies of your latest publication, to be sent by parcel post. I also asked you to send them at the earliest possible date, promising to remit promptly on receiving them. As yet they have not arrived.

I should be glad if you would inquire about this parcel, and, if, after your inquiry, in your opinion it has been lost, please fill the order again. Did you place any insurance upon the books when you shipped them? It would be well to insure future shipments.

Yours truly,
William Evans.

Orillia, Ont., Sept. 9, 1936.

The Secretary,
Grade Seven Class,
Hilltop School.

Dear Mary,

The Grade Seven Class of the King Edward School wish me to send an invitation to your class to have a spelling match with us on Friday afternoon next. We shall use only the difficult words in our book to the end of Grade Six.

Please let us know if you can come.

Yours sincerely,
Fred Smith,
Secretary.

1936

3. Supply *may* or *can* in the blanks in the following story:

One cold night an Arab was sitting in his tent. A camel suddenly thrust aside the flap of the tent and looked in.

"—— I put my head inside?" said he, "for it is cold outside."

"You ——," said the Arab, and the camel stretched his head into the tent and turned it from side to side.

"—— I warm my neck as well?" he next asked.

"You —— put your neck inside also," said the Arab.

Soon the camel said again: "It will take but little more room if I place my fore-legs within: I —— not stand in this way."

"You —— put your fore-legs in," said the Arab, making room.

"—— I not stand wholly within?" asked the camel. "You —— not close the tent while I stand in this position."

"You ——," answered the Arab. "I will have pity on you as well as myself." So the camel crowded into the tent.

"I think," said the camel, "that there is not room for both of us. We —— not both remain inside. You —— stand outside more easily as you are the smaller," and he pushed the Arab, who got quickly out of the tent.

4. Use the following words correctly in sentences: *lie*ts, *lying*, *raised*, *learn*, *stops*, *lain*, *fetch*, *laid*, *sitting*, *rises*.

II. WRITTEN COMPOSITION

Describe the exterior and then the interior of one of the following buildings: (1) Your school. (2) The church you attend. (3) A second-hand store.

Which of the bracketed forms in the following sentences do you consider correct, and why?

He was (very, very much) dissatisfied.
I am (most, almost) too tired to go.
I have never driven (as, that) far in my life.
He was (real, really) glad to see me.
He is (awful, very) sick.
Drive (slow, slowly) after crossing the bridge.

The word *good* must not be used in the place of the word *well*. We must say,

He was looking pretty well (not pretty good), when I saw him.
The crops are growing well (not good) as a result of the rain.

The adverb *badly*, on the other hand, must not be used where the adjective *bad* is required. We say, *He has acted badly;* but we must say, *He feels bad, he looks bad, it sounds bad.*

11. Do not use the expression *quite a few*. *Quite* means *entirely, completely*. It is correct to say, *I am quite satisfied;* but, strictly speaking, such expressions as *quite easily*, or *quite a long distance away* are not correct. There is, however, some justification for the use of *quite* in those sentences, since we have no word in English which will take it place; but there is no justification for *quite a few*.

12. Care should be taken to use the correct forms of prepositions and conjunctions.

Which of the bracketed forms in the following sentences are correct?

The concert was different (to, from) what I expected.
I am going (in, into) the house.
He cannot play the violin (like, as) his brother does.

EXERCISE 78

Which of the bracketed forms in each of the following sentences is correct?

1. There will be a meeting in the (student's, students') parlour this evening.
2. I was (very, very much) pleased to receive your letter.
3. (There's, their's) nothing to prevent your coming with us.
4. The prisoners (who, which) escaped have all been caught.
5. The kite was (frozen, frozen) over, last week.
6. Do not drop matches (in, into) this waste-basket.
7. It will go a long (way, ways) towards solving the problem.
8. Which do you think should go, John or (I, me)?
9. These roses are quite different (to, than, from) those.
10. I (will, shall) fail in my examinations, I am sure.
11. There were (less, fewer) than a hundred people present.
12. We had a (real, really, very) exciting game.

LACK OF AGREEMENT

196. Lack of Agreement.—

1. Very illiterate people sometimes use *was* for *were* with the pronouns *we*, *you*, and *they*. Unless you are willing to be classed as illiterate, do not say, *We was*, *You was*, etc. These pronouns always govern a verb in the plural.

Which of the bracketed forms in the following sentences are correct?

We (were, was) speaking to him this morning.
Where (was, were) you yesterday?

2. Do not use the expression *It don't*, or *He don't*. *Don't* is an abbreviation for *do not;* and while it is cor-

1925

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TRANSPORTATION

THE COST OF BAD ROADS

99. Good roads enable farmers to haul all their products to market at all seasons of the year. The increased size of the load that can be hauled and the less time required for hauling reduces the cost of marketing crops.

BAD ROADS ARE EXPENSIVE

EXERCISE

1. A town is 55 mi. from the nearest railroad point. The roads are such that the average load hauled is 1600 lb., and the average time required for a round trip is 5 da. The price for drayage from town to railroad point is $1 per hundred, and from railroad to town $1.50. How much does the freighter receive for a round trip when loaded each way?

85

1913

190 PHYSIOLOGY AND TEMPERANCE.

EXERCISE 23.

51. On first beat, let go wand with left hand, place end of wand on floor between feet. On second beat, place wand on floor at arm's length, diagonally forward on right side. Step with right foot to wand through rest of strain, keeping right arm, left knee, and wand perfectly straight.

52. Repeat No. 51 on left side.

53. Repeat No. 51, keeping the foot stationary, the knee bending with each accented beat.

54. Repeat No. 53 on left side.

EXERCISE 24.

55. Arms horizontal in front, wand held perpendicularly, bring wand back to chest eight times, keeping elbows high.

56. Wand and arms in same position, bring wand to right and left shoulders alternately four times each. In passing the wand from one side to the other, raise the arms straight to a horizontal position in front.

FIG. 6.

EXERCISE 25.

57. Hands in front of chest, point wand diagonally forward at an angle of forty-five degrees, first to the right, then to the left, alternately through strain, making the change of hands just in front of chin.

58. With wand pointing in the same direction as in

1893

ONTARIO
PUBLIC SCHOOL GEOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTORY

AN AEROPLANE JOURNEY OVER CANADA

We are going to begin our study of Geography with an imaginary journey across our own country. That is no small undertaking, for Canada is a very large country. In fact, it is one of the largest countries in the world. From your home in *Ontario* you may travel eastward, or westward, or northward, for many hundreds of miles without leaving Canada.

In the days of our great-grandfathers, we should have travelled by wagon, or by horseback, or by boat. Now there are fast express trains. They speed across Canada, wide though it is, in less than six days. For our trip we shall choose a mode of travel that is even faster than a fast express train.

This Aeroplane—F.3 Flying Boat—flew from Halifax to Winnipeg.

Many of you have seen an aeroplane like the one shown in the picture. We have chosen the aeroplane for our trip because it is so fast and because we can see much more of the country from high in the air.

The trip across Canada by aeroplane has actually been made. In October, 1920, two officers of the Canadian Air Force flew right across Canada, from *Halifax*, far to the east of Ontario, to *Vancouver*, even farther to the west. Think of flying for more than 3,300 miles over the forests and farms, the rivers and lakes, the cities and towns of Canada! What a wonderful trip they had!

Imagine yourself in the harbour of Halifax. You are seated in a seaplane—that is, a kind of aeroplane adapted for starting from and landing on the water. Everything is ready for the start. The engine begins to roar, the propeller blades begin to whirl, and the plane glides forward over the surface of the water. Then it rises gently into the air and soars higher and higher as it gathers speed. The pilot heads toward the north-west across Nova Scotia, and we are off.

Behind us is the *Atlantic Ocean*. Far out on its green water you can perhaps see a trail of smoke. This marks a steamer coming to port with a cargo of goods from overseas, or one leaving with a load of Canadian products for Great Britain. Perhaps you can see the white glint of a sail. It probably

7

1920s and 30s

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4. At $6 per cord, what is the value of a pile of cordwood 40 ft. long and 6 ft. high?

5. How many cords of wood can a man have on a frame 12 ft. long and 4 ft. high?

6. Which is cheaper for a man living in town: to buy stove wood 16 in. long at $3 per rick, or to pay $6 per cord

CORDWOOD

for cordwood and give a man $2 to saw and split it into stove wood?

7. Is it cheaper for a man to buy stove wood 16 in. long at $1.50 per rick, or to pay $2 per cord for cordwood and give a man $1.50 to saw and split it into stove wood?

8. Make an estimate of the number of cords of wood in the fallen trees that are wasting on your father's farm. What is the value of this wood at $2 per cord?

9. How many ricks of wood 16 in. long can be placed crosswise in a wagon bed 10 ft. long, 3 ft. wide, and 14 in. deep?

10. How long must a pile of wood 10 ft. high be to contain 18 cords?

20. One ton contains 35 cu. ft. of hard coal.

1913

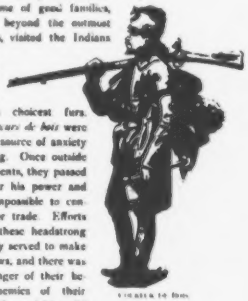
put upon the traders as discouraged private enterprise. The most profitable of all trades in Canada was that in furs. Of this the government strove to retain control by inviting the Indians to bring their furs to the settlements, and by preventing the traders from going into the forests. In order to further this object, a great fair was held annually at Montreal, to which the Indians were urged to bring their furs for barter. Hither fleets of canoes, laden with beaver skins, made their way down the Ottawa. When the fair had been formally opened, usually by the governor, the merchants fell to trading with their dusky visitors, receiving costly furs in exchange for necessaries of the hunt or ornaments for the person. Upon such occasions it was impossible to control the sale of brandy, so that too often the fair ended in drunken rioting. Nor was the plan altogether a commercial success. The more daring traders, in defiance of the laws, settled above Montreal, intercepted the

A CANADIAN TRAPPER

The coureurs de bois

Indians on their way to the fair, and by a liberal use of brandy persuaded them to part with their furs at low prices.

99 The Coureurs de Bois. — Nor did lawlessness stop here. Many adventurous youths, some of good families, advancing beyond the outmost settlements, visited the Indians in their distant villages and there secured the choicest furs. These *coureurs de bois* were a constant source of anxiety to the king. Once outside the settlements, they passed from under his power and made it impossible to control the fur trade. Efforts to punish these headstrong youths only served to make them outlaws, and there was serious danger of their becoming enemies of their country. So quickly did their number increase that at one time they made up one-twelfth of a population of ten thousand. It was love of adventure that won these restless spirits from the unattractive work of farming within the colony. Such was the freedom of life in the forest, where they



VOYAGEUR OF 1680

1905

It was Billy's duty to see that their faces, hands, nails, and teeth were clean. He had to see, also, that they had combed their hair and brushed their clothes. So when they heard the drum the second time, Betty and Ben ran into the hall, and lined up in front of Billy. They

stood erect, with their arms close to their bodies, and looked straight into Billy's eyes. Then Billy shouted, "Hands up!" and up went the hands of Betty and Ben, while Billy inspected them.

Their teachers had told them about an enemy whose name was General Microbe. He

loved dirt, and would march into the dust under their finger nails. And he was not satisfied to camp there alone. Perhaps he was afraid. At any rate, he usually brought a whole army of microbes with him.

But their teachers had told them, also, that this dirty little general, with his dirty little soldiers, was not content to camp there all the time. Sometimes he would march with a part of his army straight into the mouths of children. He did this when children handled their food with dirty fingers. Sometimes, too, he would march from their fingers to cuts or scratches on their bodies, and cause great pain there. So Billy, Betty, and Ben knew that the soldiers of this army of General Microbe were not friends but enemies, and would do them much harm if they had the chance.

Knowing this, Billy, Betty, and Ben decided to join the Children's Army, and fight the little mischief-makers. They always won the battle when they succeeded in destroying the camps of their enemies under the finger nails. When these were captured, the microbes missed one of their best chances to get into the children's mouths, or into cuts and scratches on their bodies.

When Billy was through inspecting the hands of his soldier sister and soldier brother, he stepped back and gave another command,

1917

EDUCATION AND THRIFT

EDUCATED LABOR

22. A business man who has studied the productive power of intelligent labor in New York reports that the man with a common-school education is able to produce one and one-half times as much wealth as the illiterate man, the high-school man two times as much, and the college man four times as much.

EXERCISE

1. The farm hand who is scarcely able to read and write is able to earn $16 a month. If he had a common-school education, how much more should he earn in a period of 30 yr.?

2. If a laborer who signs his name with a mark is able to accumulate $3000 in 20 yr., with a common-school education how much more should he have accumulated in the same time?

3. If a farmer by reading farm papers and books on farming 30 min. daily for a year can grow 2 bu. more of grain per acre, at the present price of corn, wheat, and oats how much does he profit from his reading in growing 20 A. of corn, 10 A. of oats, and 20 A. of wheat? Counting 10 hr. a day's work, what does he receive for a day's reading? If this is 50% of the entire gain from the reading, what is the total for a year?

4. The average salary of the man who has completed a college course is about $1000 per year, and the average wages of the man who has completed the common-school studies

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1913

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The Christmas concert

was without a doubt the high point of the school year. Children and teacher worked on it all through the autumn. Mothers made costumes and supplied sheets for curtains. Fathers built a platform, brought in the tree, played Santa Claus. On the night of the Christmas concert the little schools sparkled with the lights from borrowed lanterns, the glow of the stove and candles flickering on the tree. Parents sat, as parents do now, watching with pride tinged with a good-humoured boredom, hushing the younger children who ask loudly when something interesting is going to happen, laughing with the young performer who can't muster a whistle on cue. But Johnnie or Suzie, all done up in Sunday best or in home-made costume was sure of applause, no matter what. All the children took part, no one was ever left out, and there were always last-minute excitements, forgotten lines, torn costumes, stage fright.

For the bedazzled children of course, the arrival of Santa was the highlight. To one little girl he seemed to fly through the air, when what he did was jump across the coat-covered desk tops to the front of the room. He always had a present for everyone, candy canes and oranges, a small gift for the teacher, an exchange among the children. Sometimes there was a little community rivalry over the presents for the teacher, and often there was kindness,

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presents and encouragement for the community's poor children.

The Christmas concert was the big one, but there were other entertainments through the year, and they were taken seriously. It was considered good for the children to have the memory training, and good for them to have the experience of standing up to sing or recite.

During the autumn the whole community attended other parties to raise a few dollars to buy Christmas candy and oranges for the children. Only in recent years have Canadians become blase about oranges. For many years they were a seasonal treat, one of the delights of Christmas. The fund-raising parties were sometimes box socials, where the men bid on lunches packed by their ladies. Or they were pancake and amateur nights when the adults trotted out their songs and recitations for one another's amusement.

A surprising number of schools had pianos or organs, paid for like other extras, by money raised in the community. A few schools had music teachers visiting once a week or so. They were sometimes local people, but more often paid by the education ministry to cover a circuit, travelling many miles every week. One teacher said the children in her little school became good enough as a choir to win some prizes in Kiwanis music festivals. But even so, all the children participated. The music teacher told them, "If you're a monotone, don't sing too loud, just keep your mouth going."

There were patriotic playlets done from booklets issued by the provincial governments during war years and on Victoria Day. Outside French Canada, that was an important holiday. Canada is said never to have taken the melting pot approach to its immigrant groups, but for a long time, all Canadian school children learned, not about the wonders of Canada, but about the glories of the British Empire. Their classrooms sported pictures of the reigning English monarch, the school flew the Union Jack, and Queen Victoria loomed large.

Material for the year's other entertainments came from commercial booklets with titles like *Merry Little Dialogues, Humorous Homespun Dialogues, or A Collection of Bright, Humorous Numbers for School, Church, 4-H and Other Societies*. They not only told you what to say, they told you how to say it, with the right expressions and gestures. They advised lots and lots of drill, the goal of which was the achievement of naturalness, enthusiasm and distinctness.

Most of the humour is broad and well tried. It's also open in its bigotry. The ministrel show form was popular, and there are a lot of stereotype black characters to be played by children who had probably never seen a black person. However, blacks were not the only butts of the humour; the casts of characters also included people who spoke English with an accent, old maids, well-padded weepy widows on the lookout for husbands, stingy old bachelors, flighty girls, city people in the country, and country people in the city.

The humour at adult gatherings was as robust. One teacher fondly remembered amateur nights at her school that sound fairly breath-taking. People produced home grown dialogues that named other people in their jokes. "If you gave it to someone else, you'd get it the next time."

Whatever the reason for a party at the schoolhouse, everyone went. The little children slept peacefully, covered by coats, on the desks that were pushed back against the wall. Square dances, waltzes and schotisshes that shook the rafters were danced to homegrown accompaniments on fiddles, guitars or the school piano, and sometimes a fiddler's collection was taken up.

What was true of the children was true of the adults. Community pressure usually kept things well behaved. There might be a pint or two in the cars, or some whiskey in the coffee urn, but most of the parties were self-policed. Anyone who got out of hand was removed. And the pranks were about the same as they were during the day, like the night the young fellow shook sneeze powder on the hot stove. During the stampede of coughing, sneezing, weeping dancers for open doors and windows, the culprit made his getaway.

Everyone made the most of the parties, but finally the time would come to collect your dishes and coffee urn, gather up the sleeping children and start home. If there wasn't a school barn, the horses were blanketed and tied to the fence posts all around the school. If it was a cold night, you weren't long getting home behind a horse who knew he was headed for a warm barn. On the Prairies, the parties sometimes went on until daybreak so the horses could see to take their sleigh loads of worn-out revellers home just in time to do the chores.

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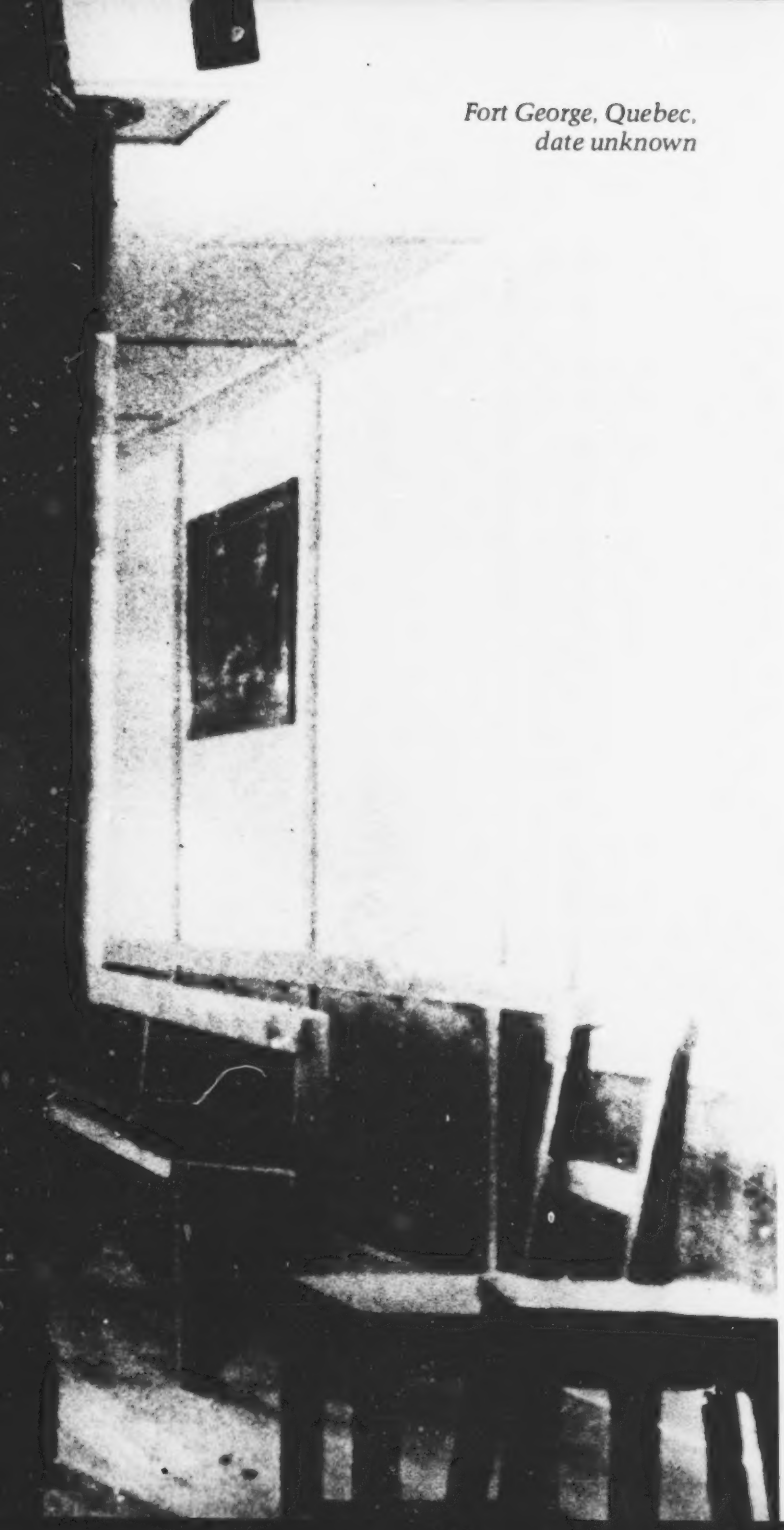

Fort George, Quebec, date unknown

At Christmas time the teacher and pupils put on a concert consisting of dialogues, recitations, drills and songs. Noons and recesses were used to prepare for this concert so that it would be ready to present a few nights before Christmas. A huge Christmas tree stood in one corner waiting for Santa to come and give out the gifts, bags of candy and other goodies. There was always something for every child, even for those visiting from neighbouring districts.

This was followed by a huge lunch put on by the ladies of the district. Coffee was usually made at the home of one of the families, put into an eight-gallon cream can and kept hot at school either by placing it on the school stove or being well wrapped with blankets to keep it hot till needed. After lunch the desks and benches were placed around the outside of the room and the dance got underway to the music of a local orchestra. This usually did not cease until three or four o'clock the next morning.

The most exciting event in the life of a rural school child was the Christmas concert, in which every child took part. Something always happened, which then, seemed such a tragedy, like the time one of the "negro" dancers lost his stocking mask just before his turn to dance and someone had to dash down to the furnace to get some black off the stove lid to blacken his face in a hurry. The teachers arranged to have their concerts on different nights so that the surrounding folk could attend. These came from far and near all bundled up and travelling in a sleigh singing carols in time to the jingle of the sleigh bells on the horses, no matter how frosty and cold the night.

West Lynne, Alberta, 1927
Schools of the Parkland

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Some of the best school memories are recalled when the Christmas concert is mentioned: thoughts of practicing; bringing a pair of Mother's cleanest sheets to hang up on wires thus enclosing the stage; someone to bring the tree so that all could help in putting it up securely and decorating; arranging streamers and bells; lunch and coffee arrangements.

Edwell School, Alberta, 1935
Schools of the Parkland

Kelso Settlement, Cochrane District, Ontario, 1910-15

Rainy River District, Ontario, 1905

(*5 children march in, hands behind.*)

1st: When Xmas drew near
I wanted to hear
Everything everyone said
But Grandma talked low
And Mom whispered so
It gave me a pain in the head

(*Produces large ears with elastic and puts them on. White cotton, large and stuffed, or made of cardboard.*)

Now I need have no worry or fears
I've a more sensible set of ears

(*The second child attaches a false nose, the third a big mouth, the fourth blown up rubber gloves as extra hands, and the fifth glasses. Children grin at each other, wiggle big ears, wave nose, pretend chewing, flap extra hands, look over and under out of glasses. All link arms and say:*

We each have five good senses
They're busy all the year
But we need about a hundred
When Christmas time is near.

(*March off to music – one hand on shoulder ahead, grinning at audience.*)

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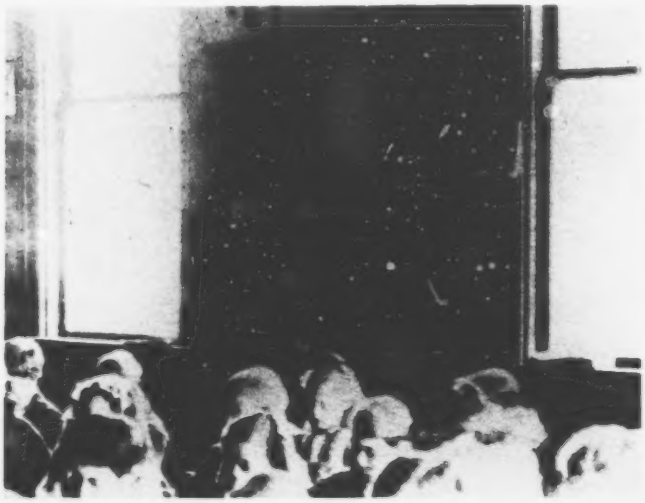
One classroom skit for the children in an Ontario school imitated the Happy Gang, a popular radio program in the 1940s and 1950s. Some of the jokes may seem familiar.

(*Knock outside*)
(*Radio Announcer, looking over papers*)

Gabby – Who's there?
Daisy Mae – It's the Meadowvale Doodillers!
Gabby – Well, come on in!
(*Play "They Cut Down the Pine Tree" once – Ring cow bell loudly*)
Gabby – Yes sir, this is the powerful little station of KYZ Meadowvale broadcasting at a frequency of once a year.
Gabby – Julie Belle will now tell us about He and She.
Julie Belle – He met her in the meadow
As the sun was sinking low.
They strolled along together
In the twilight silver glow.
Patiently she waited
As he lowered all the bars,
Her soft eyes beamed upon him
As radiant as the stars.
She neither smiled nor thanked him
Because she knew not how.
For he was but a farm boy,
And she a Jersey cow.



Gabby – Say, do you want a job, Casey?
Casey – I sure do.
Gabby – Well, I want a man to sell cigars.
Casey – How much does the job pay?
Gabby – Two bits an hour.
Casey – Lead me to it, lead me to it.
Gabby – Now when someone asks you what you are doing, you say selling cigars, and when they ask how much are they, you say two for a nickel. Then if they ask you if they smoke well, you say some do and some don't. Then if they say they aren't going to buy none, you say OK, if you don't, someone else will. Now, do you get the idea?
Casey – Sure I do.
Gabby – Well, I'm going outside now and when I come in I'm going to act like a stranger and I want you to act as a saleman. (*Goes out*)
Casey – (*spends time fixing box*)
Gabby – Say, can you tell me what time the train goes to Streetsville?
Casey – Two for a nickel, two for a nickel.
Gabby – Say, do people around here think you are crazy?
Casey – Some do and some don't.
Gabby – Say, I have a notion to smack you in the mouth with my fist.
Casey – OK, if you don't, someone else will.

School exercise book, Jessie Finlayson

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William: Oh, here's his house. Now ready. (*All sing some Christmas song. Voice is heard soon after they begin.*)

Mr. Stebbings, a self-confessed crab (*outside*): Scat! Scat! Scat! I ain't going to have no blamed cats yowling. (*All sing very loud.*)

Mr. Stebbings (*poking head into view*): I declare if it ain't boys and girls. Lucky I didn't throw that bootjack. It might have killed one of 'em, then I'd have been sent to jail. What's it all about, anyway.

Mary: It's Christmas, Mr. Stebbings.

All: Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas.

Mr. Stebbings: Christmas! Christmas! I declare, so it is. I'd clear forgot all about Christmas. But then, Christmas ain't what is used to be.

Girls: We've come to bring you
Christmas Cheer
And happiest greetings of the year.

Susie: We've got an invitation for you, too, Mr. Stebbings. Miss Hough wants you to come to a little Christmas party at her house tonight. We're all going to be there.

Mr. Stebbings: Miss Hough? A Christmas party? Do you really mean it?

All: Yes! Yes!

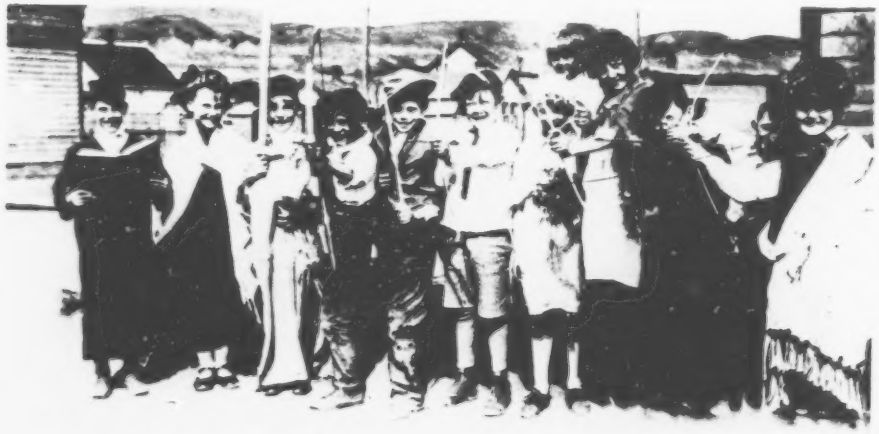
Mr. Stebbing: I believe I'll go. You may tell Miss Hough that I'll be there without fail. (*Exit*)

George: That beats anything I ever heard of. We're having splendid luck.

Henry: Maybe there'll be a chance for some serenading before long. At any rate we shall bring into two lonely hearts the spirit of the Christmas time.

Mary: And may they keep it in their hearts the whole year long. (*Exeunt singing*)

The Carol Singers
Lively Dialogues
T. S. Denison and Company, Chicago, 1937



Parkdale School, Drumheller, Alberta, 1925

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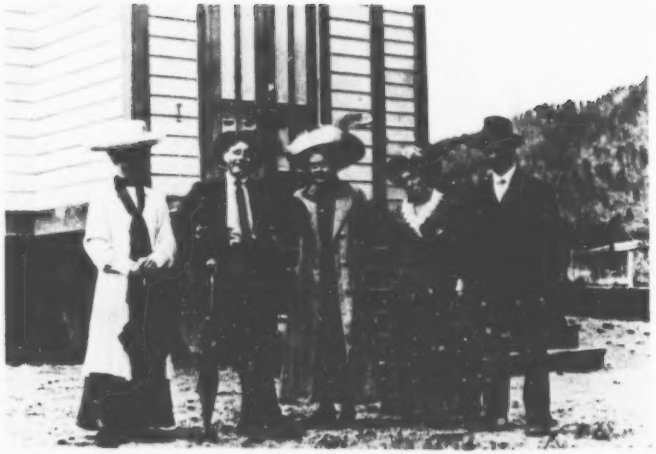
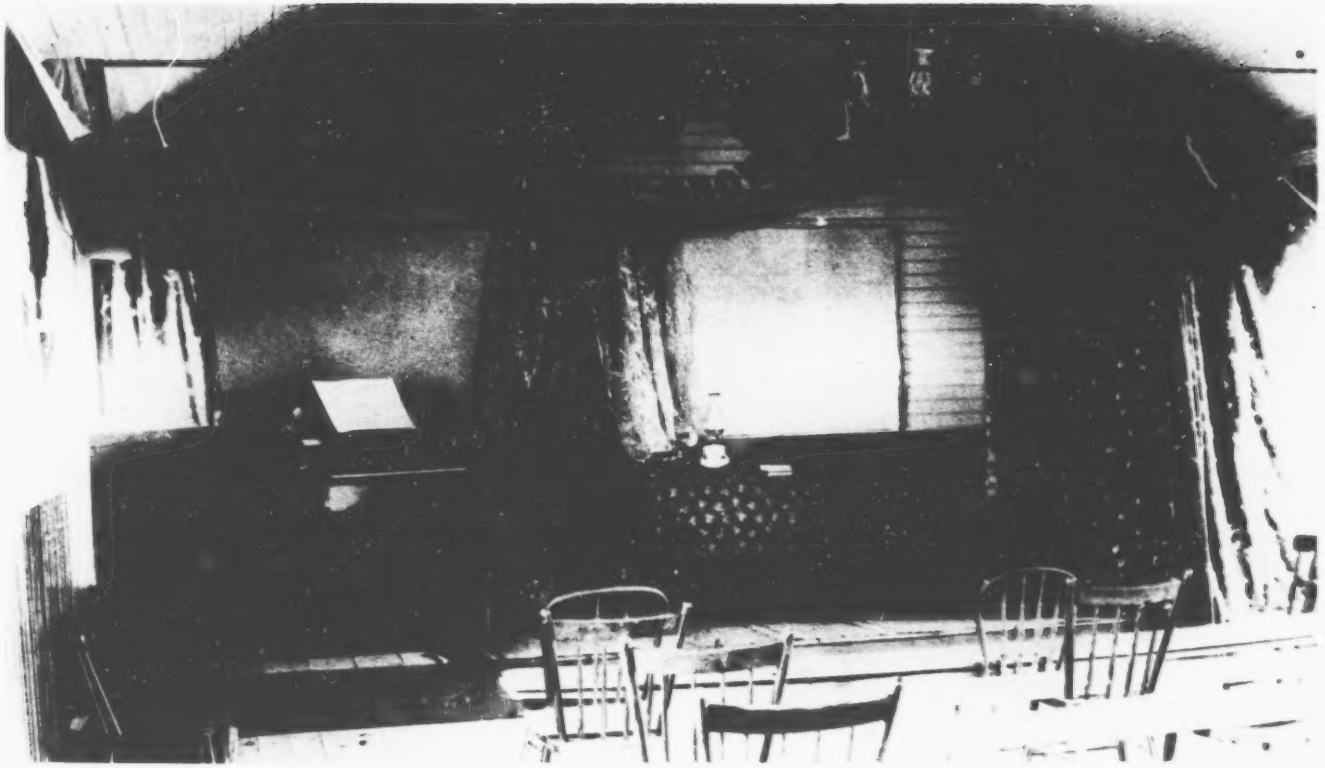


White School, Oyama, British Columbia, 1911

Santa arrived with a team of horses and a great jangle of bells which went on and on for such a long time that someone was dispatched to the yard to see what was the matter. Santa finally appeared, hat askew, feeling as high as a kite. He was also hilariously funny, delighting children and adult alike, performing his duties beautifully. However, I did breathe a sigh of relief when I saw our revered member of the school board stagger back safely to his sleigh and dash out of sight.

Teacher
Ontario, 1938

Near Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, about 1950



Home-made stage decorated for a school play, Bresaylor School, Saskatchewan

The school and church were the only places for getting together except in the homes. Since the schools were denominational the school building was often used as a church, even when there was a church building. Often the church was larger and harder to heat so in the winter the weekly prayer meetings and Ladies Aid or Women's Auxiliary meetings were held in the school. Also during the war the Women's Patriotic Association used to meet in the school. Jubilee Guilds, CGIT, all used the school as a meeting place.

The one-room school at Burlington was a two-storey building, the upper storey being a large room the same size as the floor area of the school building and probably eight or ten feet high. This room had a platform at the end opposite to the stairway which was built at the entrance end of the building. The room was used for community get-togethers such as school concerts, church teas and even dancing. (I say even dancing because this was a Methodist community and many of the older people disapproved of dancing as worldly.) In 1941 this became our second classroom, thus ending the one-room school there.

Newfoundland, 1930s

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On December 10, 1912, a special meeting of the board was held for the purpose of enquiring into the disturbance created at the schoolhouse at the recent social gathering. The outcome was that it was resolved that the secretary write Mr. Eagle as follows:

Dear Sir:

The board of trustees very much regret the disgraceful proceeding at the social gathering on Saturday evening when, owing to the indecent behaviour and disorderly conduct of certain young men, the meeting was broken up and the ladies' cakes, etc., meant for supper were stolen and the board of trustees have passed a resolution that until the people expose the young men who have committed these offenses, the board will not allow any social, meeting, dance or anything outside of strictly school business to be held in the school and the board would like you to publicize this letter throughout the district.

Signed Wm. Rodgers (Ch)
Jesse Bourne (Sec. T.)

In Red Deer, Alberta, box socials were generally held in the school prior to the Christmas concert. The reason for this was to raise money for the Christmas treats and was accomplished by auctioneering off the lunch boxes. These were prepared by the young ladies of the district. If there were some special box wanted by some chap, whose girl friend had especially prepared, the boys as a rule, saw to it that he paid a good amount of hard-earned money.

Pancakes and an amateur night were usually combined. After huge quantities of pancakes and bacon along with some good strong coffee were consumed, the tables would be cleared and seats shuffled around. The Master of Ceremonies would then take the floor with a list prepared beforehand and would call upon each contestant to come forward and give whatever he had prepared. This generally produced a very enjoyable evening as it was surprising what talent would come forward on such an occasion.

Alberta, 1937
Schools of the Parkland

Springbank, Alberta, 1938

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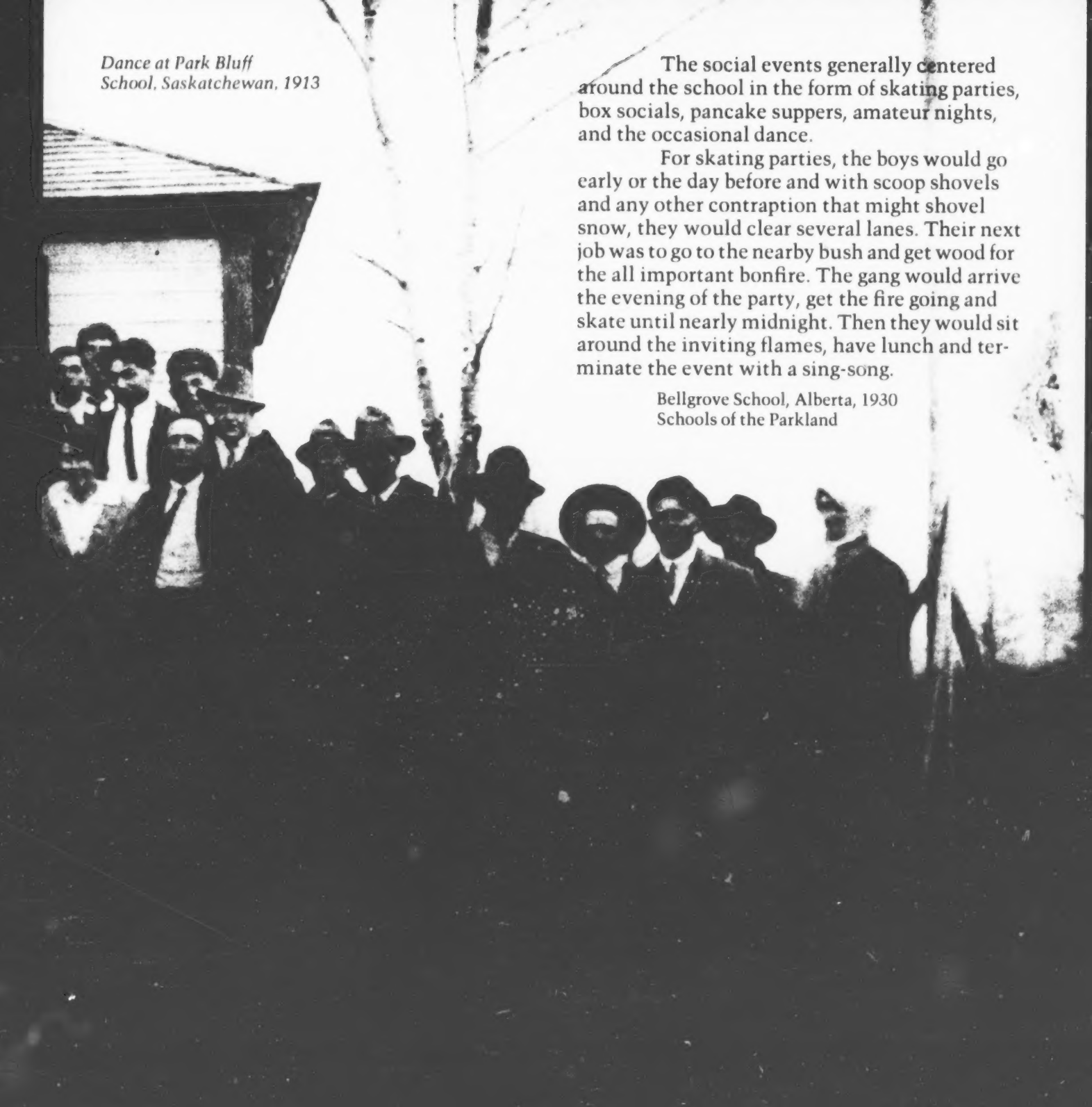

Dance at Park Bluff School, Saskatchewan, 1913

The social events generally centered around the school in the form of skating parties, box socials, pancake suppers, amateur nights, and the occasional dance.

For skating parties, the boys would go early or the day before and with scoop shovels and any other contraption that might shovel snow, they would clear several lanes. Their next job was to go to the nearby bush and get wood for the all important bonfire. The gang would arrive the evening of the party, get the fire going and skate until nearly midnight. Then they would sit around the inviting flames, have lunch and terminate the event with a sing-song.

Bellgrove School, Alberta, 1930
Schools of the Parkland

A rural schoolyard

was more than a playground, it was an important extension of the schoolhouse. That's where the well was, if there was a well. That's where the outhouses were, the wood pile, and the barn for the horses.

There was just as much advice available on the schoolyard as on the schoolhouse – how to choose a site, where to put the well, where the outhouse should be in relation to the well, what to plant to beautify the yard – and the results were about the same. It all depended on the good sense, good will and budget of the trustees and the community.

There was stress on aesthetics and tidiness, planting trees, putting up an attractive fence, keeping the yard clear of debris. But the real concern was that school sites be chosen and organized so that they didn't invite infestations of killer diseases that claimed a terrible toll until half a century ago.

An Ontario board of health report in the 1880s said, "It is evident that these two diseases [diphtheria and typhoid] cause a higher rate of mortality in rural districts, as compared with the total number of deaths from all causes, than in cities. The carelessness regarding water supply, drainage, location and management of outbuildings etc. in rural [school] sections no doubt operates as a cause in producing this undesirable and anomalous condition of affairs."

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Instruction went out from provincial authorities showing how and why to situate the outhouse so that there would be no seepage from it into the well. In later periods the well water was tested regularly by health authorities, or was supposed to be, and the well was to be drained and cleaned every year. Before that there were rule-of-thumb tests for water purity, one of which, published in 1886, is enough to make one swear off. "The water should be clear and free of suspended matter. It should be colourless or blueish if looked at through a depth of two or three feet; green waters are not generally hurtful; yellowish or brownish are to be looked upon with suspicion, unless the colour is known to depend upon peat or iron."

School outhouses were problems even when they were properly removed from the well. Cleaning and moving them isn't anyone's favourite chore, and in some schools it was rarely done unless authorities forced a cleanup. A public health nurse visiting schools in the 1940s said some of the outhouses she saw were out of this world, that some were so full no one could use them.

Nor were they exempt from traditional outhouse pranks. They blossomed with graffiti and were tipped over on ceremonial occasions. People were sometimes locked in them or subjected to embarrassing attention when they came out of them. They were the targets for missiles and firecrackers. They were also the subject of official fretting over modesty. They were supposed to serve only one sex, be screened, well separated, and otherwise voyeur proof.

In later years, some school boards bought indoor pail-a-day toilets or installed septic tanks. That ushered in a whole new set of problems with drainage tiles and general efficiency. The nurse said they were as bad as the outhouses because they didn't get the pail-a-day they were supposed to get, or there were too many people using them. But presumably they were at least warmer in the winter.

To the kids, of course, the schoolyard didn't mean the woodpile, the outhouse, or the well. It meant recess and lunchtime when there was bush to explore, snowballs to throw, with luck a swimming hole nearby. And on the Prairies it was an unwise gopher who ventured near a school.

"The first gopher to make its appearance in spring must have wished it had not been in such a hurry to come out and certainly not in the Valley Centre schoolyard, of all places it might have chosen. The cry, 'Gopher' brought all, big and small, old and young, in pursuit until it dashed down a hole when pails of water were poured in. This was repeated daily until not one gopher dared to appear on the premises."

There were games called Duck-on-the-Rock, Anti-I-Over, and Pom-Pom-Pull-Away. There were baseball and tag games, toboggan slides and snow snakes, and patches of ice cleared for shinny. The teachers, not much older than their pupils in lots of schools, often joined the games, which could mean a good long recess and an extra few innings.

Some schools had see-saws, maypoles, a basketball hoop. What they didn't have they improvised, and if the home-made equipment wasn't always up to Little League standards at least everyone got to play. When a bat broke, a light fence post would do. When the ball was lost or worn out, rags or string were wound tight to make a substitute. When there weren't hockey sticks for the shinny game, the nearest patch of bush supplied some. Some teachers finished up almost every week with a Friday afternoon field day, a game between neighbouring schools or sports day for several schools.

Then at the very end of the year came the school picnic, when everyone came to cheer on the children at their games, and to stuff themselves full of the food provided by the mothers.

Education ministries encouraged communities to take pride in their schoolyards. The first Friday in May was set apart as Arbor Day, when the children cleaned up the grounds and planted shade trees and flower beds. Many a farmer can point to a tree in a local schoolyard still flourishing where he planted it when he was a tyke. For a time there was a fashion for school gardens and for school fairs. Part of the school grounds or an adjoining field were carved up so that each child had a plot a few feet square on which to grow flowers and vegetables from seed supplied by provincial education or agriculture ministries. The same motives were behind both. The idea was to extend farm children's agricultural education, to work through the children to send home talk of the latest in farming methods, and to encourage the use of the best seed.

A 1909 Ontario agriculture department report said, "We hope to have our people realize that the soil is

Inglewood, School District No. 548, Saskatchewan

God's gift to man, and that the position of husbandman is after all of very great importance to the state."

Impetus for the school garden program came from a remarkable and almost forgotten Canadian, Sir William Macdonald, founder of the tobacco company. He was a bachelor, born in Prince Edward Island, who had a series of strange feuds with members of his family, made millions of dollars, and led an extremely frugal private life. He was a publicity-shy person who, over the course of a long life, spent 14 million dollars on education philanthropies, largesse that was shared by McGill University and Macdonald College in Montreal, Macdonald Institute in Guelph, and by thousands of country school children. He seemed to want to reform rural education singlehandedly. One of the things he did was to establish a network that eventually trained teachers to work with the gardens; he also supplied money to buy seed and paid for greenhouses and extra land.

The school fairs might be miniscule events held at the school, or more ambitious affairs, combining displays from several schools. Local experts did the judging, and feelings could run high, especially if any hanky panky with the exhibits was suspected. There were small cash prizes, perhaps 50 cents for a big win, there were ribbons, and the honor of having work hung up in the class room.

There were 25 school fairs in Ontario when they started in 1912, and by 1928 there were 560, involving 4,800 rural schools. That year the agriculture department distributed grain or potatoes to 53,000 school children. But by then the day of the little fairs was almost over. During the 1930s government support stopped, and as a result so did the fairs. The children took their efforts to children's sections in the fall fairs instead.

There were children's prize lists, and competitions in art, in writing or printing. There were themes, such as Old Macdonald Had a Farm, or Farm Safety. A child who won at a local fair could go on to larger fairs. But some farm families took a jaundiced view of this entry of the children into the adult arena, saying it was just a way to lure the parents to the fairs.

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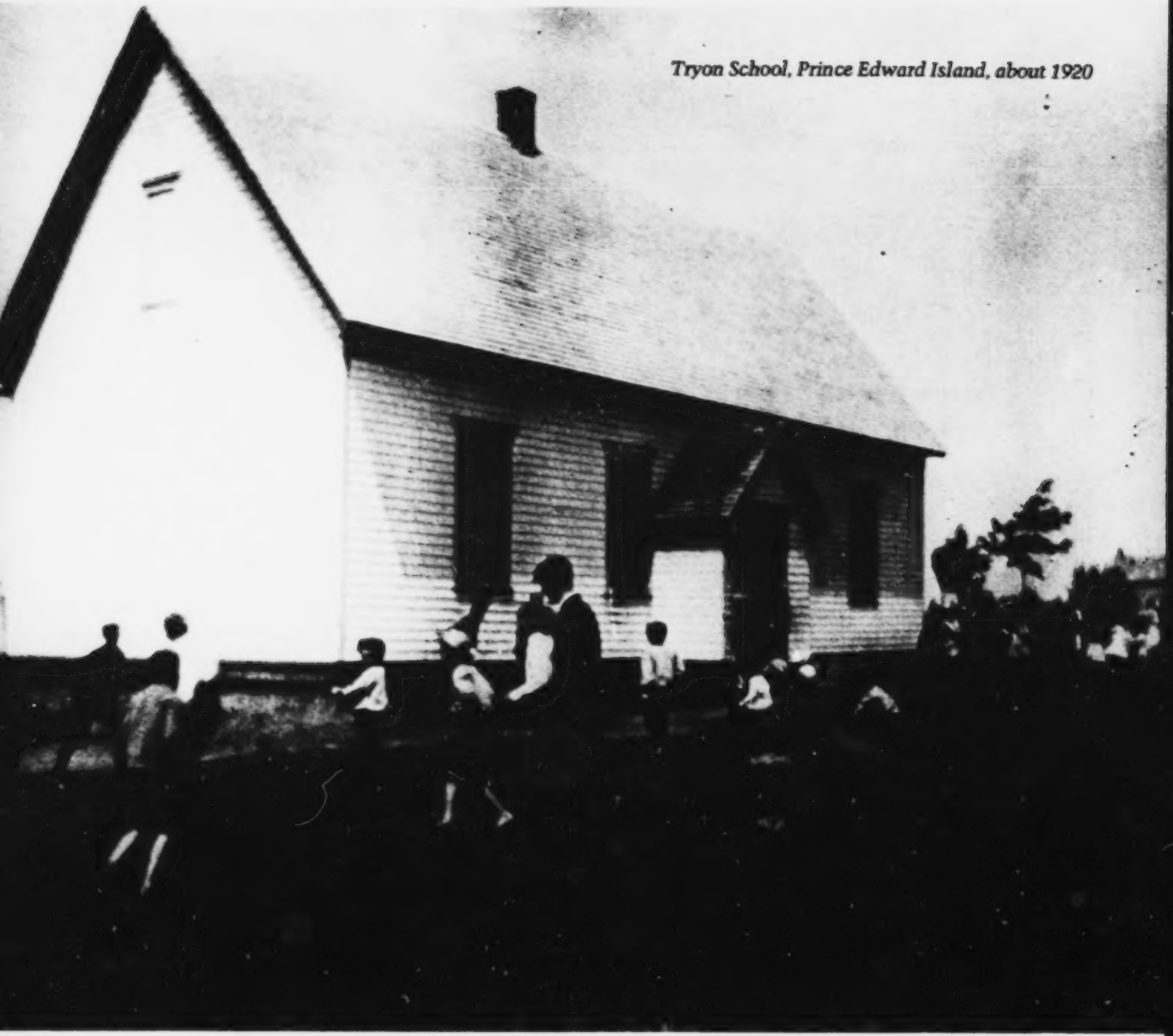

Tryon School, Prince Edward Island, about 1920

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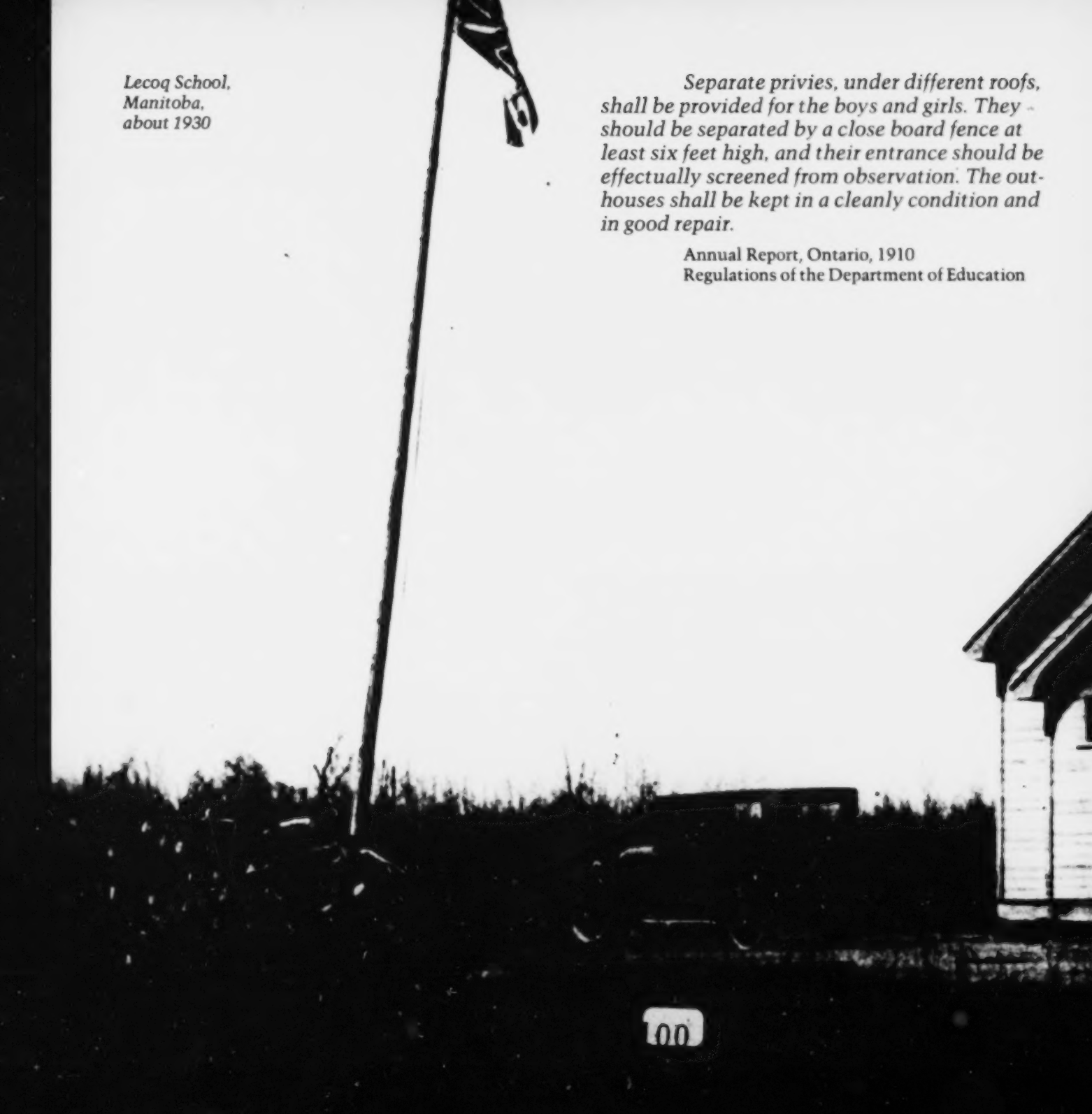


Lecoq School,
Manitoba,
about 1930

Separate privies, under different roofs, shall be provided for the boys and girls. They should be separated by a close board fence at least six feet high, and their entrance should be effectually screened from observation. The outhouses shall be kept in a cleanly condition and in good repair.

Annual Report, Ontario, 1910
Regulations of the Department of Education

School sites shall be in dry, elevated positions, easily accessible, and provided with good water.

School sites shall, when possible, be isolated and so situated that the surroundings will not interfere with the work of the classes nor be injurious to the health or the morals of the pupils.

School sites shall not exhale any miasmas, and they shall be as far removed as possible from swamps or cemeteries."

Catholic Committee of Quebec, 1906

Dan pulled up on a level bench of prairie and said to me, this is where we will build the school, and said, help me unload. By the time the others caught up Dan's load was off on the prairie grass. Son Frank blew up at once over his Dad's location choice for the school building, pointing out that it was too near a small pond that might become stagnant during the summer and pollute the pure prairie air. Dan's choice was finally accepted, though, by the other trustees, after a few swigs from the community bottle. The lumber was piled on the grass and we all left for home, riding the hounds of the lumber wagons.

Alberta, 1903
History of the Severn Creek Public School

89. The following plan may be modified according to circumstances, but the main features of it should be retained, especially in regard to the privies, play grounds and play sheds.

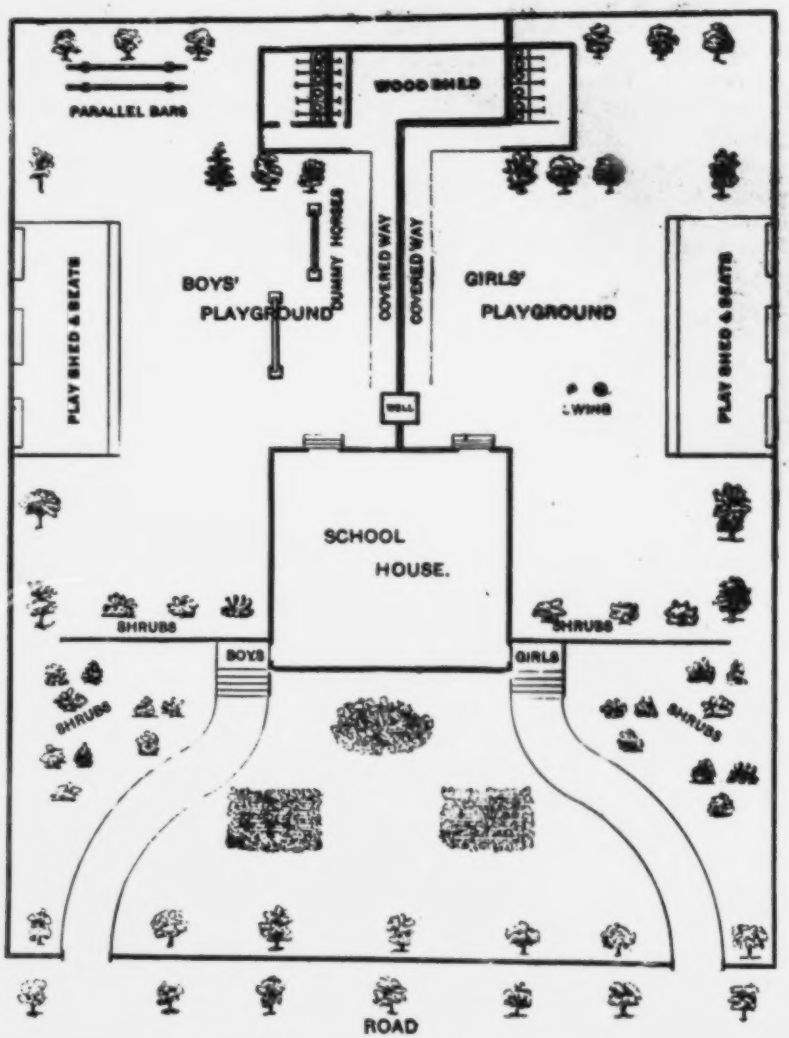
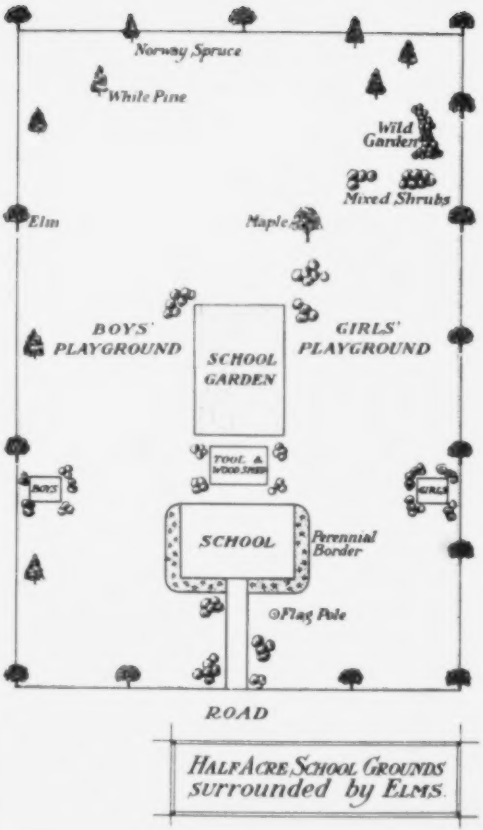


FIG. 15.—BLOCK PLAN OF SCHOOL GROUNDS.



HALF ACRE SCHOOL GROUNDS SURROUNDED BY ELMS.

As with school buildings, so also with the school grounds, governments offered plans and advice to guide local school boards in establishing safe, healthy facilities.

Above and right: Improvement of School Grounds, *Ontario Department of Education, 1908*

Left and far right: School Architecture: Hints and Suggestions on School Architecture and Hygiene, *J. George Hodgins, Ontario Department of Education, 1886*

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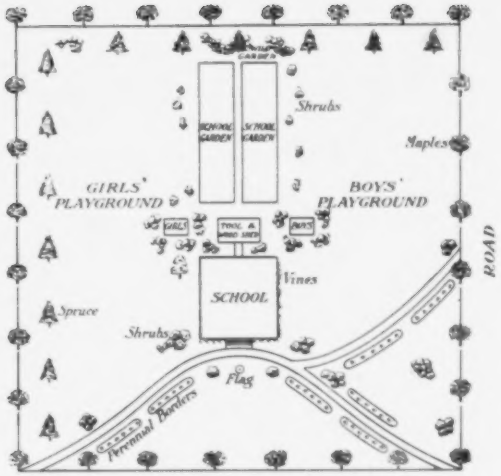
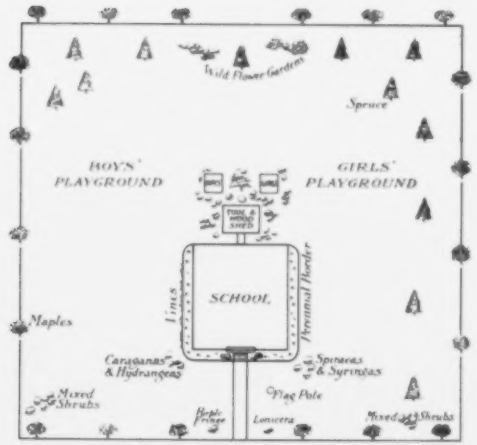


PLAN FOR ONE ACRE SCHOOL GROUND AT CROSS ROADS.



HALF ACRE SCHOOL GROUND WITH FLOWER BORDER AROUND BUILDING

"The only way to protect a well that has not already become contaminated is by the most scrupulous attention to its surroundings. So long as the old privy system is in use, and the sink discharges upon the ground, stables, hog pens and refuse heaps are in existence, so long will wells become dangerously contaminated, unless situated at a great distance from any of the objects named. Twenty-five, fifty or even a hundred feet of intervening soil is no guarantee of safety to the well, as the percolating fluids will often go to a much greater distance through certain kinds of earth."

27. Dr. P. H. Bryce, Secretary to the Provincial Board of Health, adds the following suggestions:—

"Wells should be lined with water-lime, and have the surface around them high and inclined from the well so that there will be no infiltration of surface water. A ventilating pipe short above the surface and deep below the top of well as an inlet, and another, short below and high into air for an outlet ventilator. Top of well must be tightly laid, to prevent leaking through it."

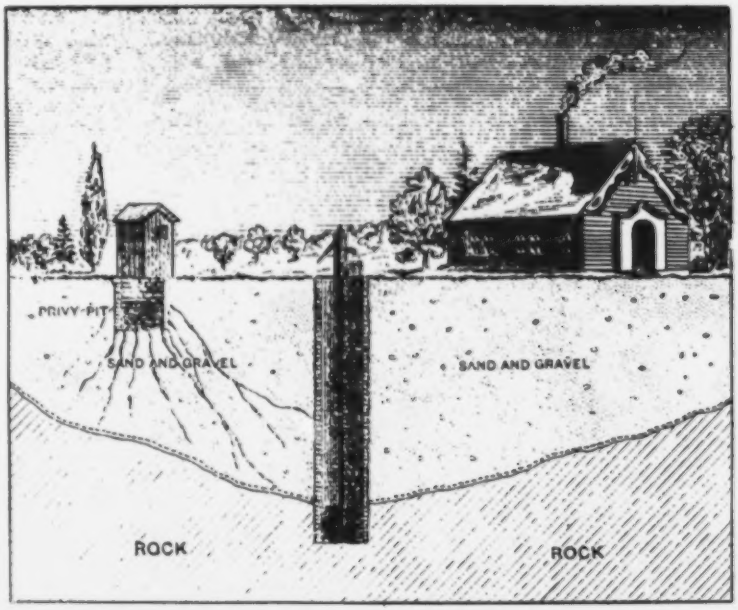


FIG. 3.—PERCOLATION FROM THE PRIVY PIT TOWARDS THE WELL.

28. To show how drainage from the privy from higher levels of a school site, and from other places, towards the well, see the accompanying illustration, (Fig 3). Care should be taken, as suggested in the preceding paragraph, to prevent this.

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New Alberni School, Alberni and Port Alberni, British Columbia

Sometimes we tramped out a rink in the snow in the corner of the school yard, and formed a bucket brigade from the pump to make the ice surface. We'd work a couple of hours at it. I remember walking home in the moonlight after skating and tobogganing parties at the school.

Student
Quebec, 1930s

The bull flies especially became very troublesome. The new school district did not have much money for any extras, like screens, so we got an old pan and kept it on top of the stove with a smudge in it. As long as there was smoke we had peace. One day the inspector arrived. I can remember him now as he stood in the doorway and surveyed the smokey scene, then demanded to know what this was all about. He was furious. It was not a very good idea to put the inspector in such a bad mood at the start of his visit, but it resulted in a screen door and screens for the windows.

Granville, Alberta, 1930s
Clover and Wild Strawberries

Mt. Stewart School, Prince Edward Island, about 1935

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School opened in March, 1909. During this first term, on Arbor Day, all the pupils and the teacher went in a couple of wagons to a farm south of the Schmidt place, and got spruce trees, one for each child, which were picked according to the size of the child. A noteworthy fact in the planting is that, instead of planting like sticks in straight rows as most people do, these were planted in clumps, as they grow in nature, on the two front corners of the grounds. One must admit that this plan of planting adds to their attractiveness and they have been stronger to withstand fifty-eight years of exposure to climate and children.

Craig School, Alberta
Schools of the Parkland

You expect the Government to do it. You have absolute control of it, and yet you are inclined to say, "We have a poor school in this section. I wonder why the Government does not do better by us." The school grounds are not in very good shape, are not inviting, and are not even levelled up. They do not contain some of the most beautiful plants in the native woods nearby. But, there was no one to look after it. Why don't you do it? Why don't you have schoolyard days? Do it next spring. Get the trustees to give the children a holiday and go out and help fix up those grounds. You will be surprised how contagious this is. It is the initiative that is lacking and when somebody supplies the initiative it will soon spread. The women have got to be the rural leaders in the school work – the schoolhouse and the school grounds."

Ontario Women's Institute Report, 1912

Arbor Day, Spring Hill School, Pigeon Lake area, Alberta

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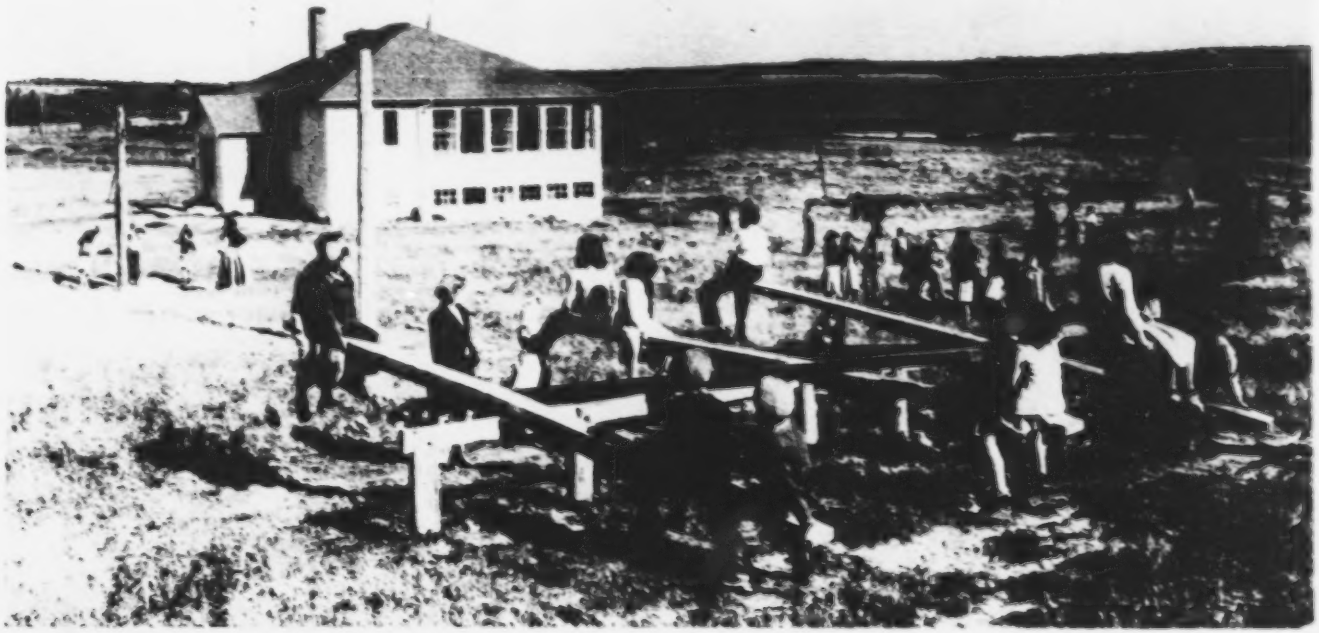
There was little or no playground equipment in those days except for a swing. Football and a sort of baseball were played. Such games as Hide-and-Seek, Pom-Pom-Pull-Away and Anti-I-Over were played. Winter was a special time with sleigh riding down the hill and skating on the creek. There is still some argument as to who had the fastest sleigh.

The walk back up the hill didn't do much to dampen the enthusiasm, in fact it often developed into a race to see if you could get to the top of the hill and away again before the bell rang. No one hurried half as much after the bell rang. By 1930 this was all over. The children started to play softball during the thirties.

Eldwell School, Alberta, 1920s
Schools of the Parkland

Snow slide, Prince George, British Columbia, about 1925

Beauval, Saskatchewan, 1949



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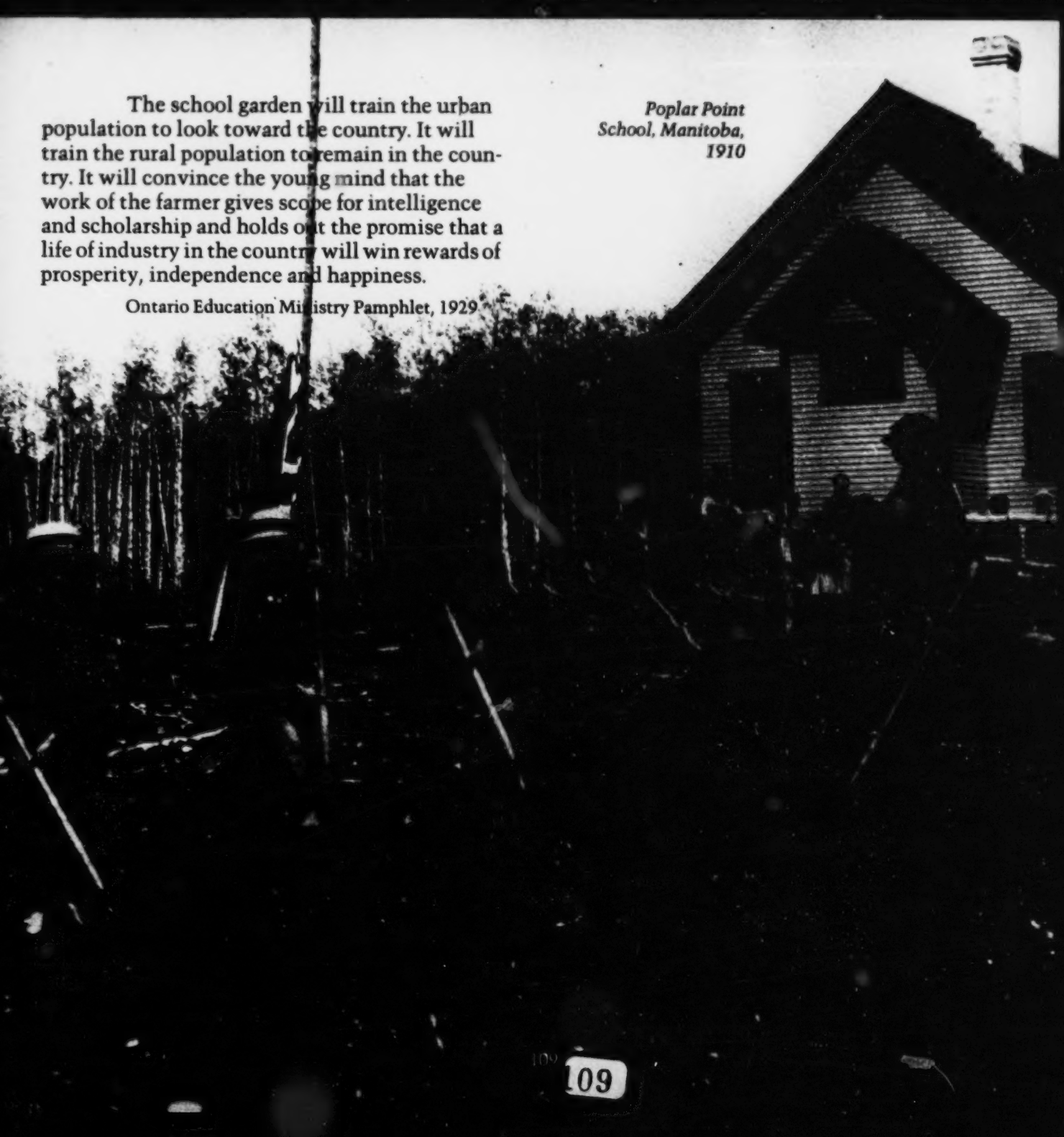
The school garden will train the urban population to look toward the country. It will train the rural population to remain in the country. It will convince the young mind that the work of the farmer gives scope for intelligence and scholarship and holds out the promise that a life of industry in the country will win rewards of prosperity, independence and happiness.

Ontario Education Ministry Pamphlet, 1929



Poplar Point School, Manitoba, 1910

North Gower, Ontario, 1904

Many teachers and trustees failed to perceive the educational possibilities in a garden – they considered it a place to raise plants rather than to raise children. Each depends on the teacher to create a proper attitude towards this work in a community, for the teacher who knows how to use the garden educationally will make the operations connected with it the basis of observations, investigations and serious lessons which the parents will hear about and recognize to be very different from the hoeing and weeding operations they may do at home.

Ontario, 1916

The first class of British Columbia teachers in rural science, Victoria, 1914

School fair at Leo, Alberta, 1919

The Shetland, Ontario school children have just finished harvesting the products of their fourth garden. It has been found that each child likes a plot for himself rather than in partnership with someone else. So each from beginners to fifth class pupils is given a small farm three feet by eight feet. Then the pupils of each class decided what they would grow. This year all the little folks up to the second class grew two kinds of beets – Detroit Red and Crosby's Egyptian. The children try to find out the best yield by actual comparison and also the best kind when cooked.

One experimental plot was sown with a mixture of oats, red clover and sugar cane. This was sent from Guelph to show its use as a pasture. Besides a war plot of potatoes several plots had oats in.

The children are interested and doing their best and are now looking forward to their next garden.

Ontario Women's Institute Report, 1916

Schoolchildren with their harvest, Mohr's Corners, Ontario, 1904

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We used to have a tent up, a great big huge tent we'd have, and cages outside, and we'd have the animals. Kids would take colts in and take their pets. We'd have contests, we had to name different horses and cattle. I've still got a quilt I showed."

Student

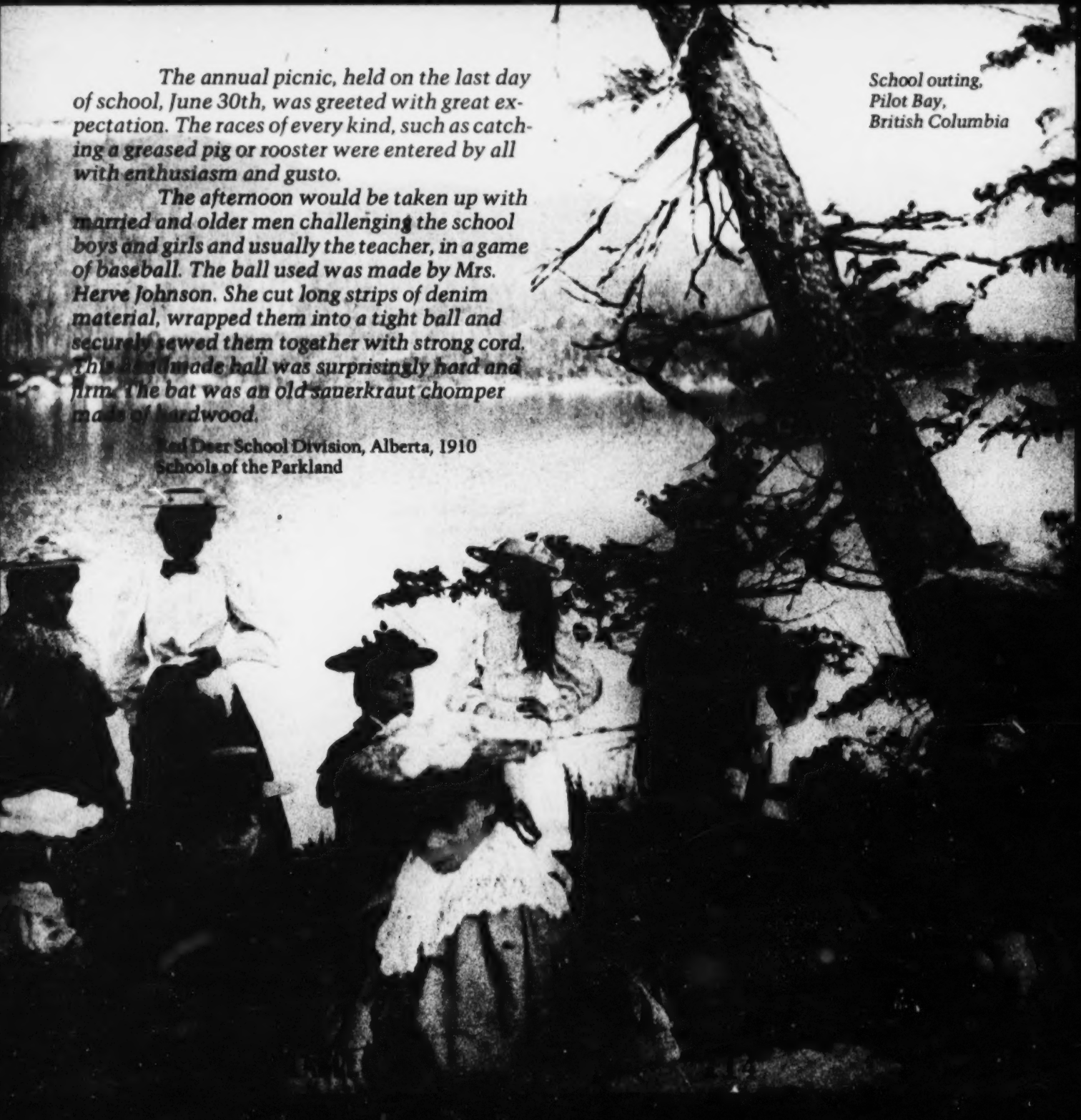
The Leamington, Ontario, Fair was held the end of September, and one of the big events was the school parade. Most of September was used to teach the children how to march, right-left, right-left. Then there were prizes for the best costumes in the parade.

Teacher
Southwestern Ontario, 1920-30

We do not want the boy or girl to consider it simply from the standpoint of how much prize money he or she may win. We want to encourage our boys and girls to be good losers. (Applause.) *I have often heard mothers say at these fairs, "My boy had the best stuff, but the judges were crooked." To my mind nothing worse could be said in the presence of the children. Another thing I would like you to encourage as much as possible is honesty in preparing exhibits.* (Applause.) *Criticism has been made of the school fair work because it has been alleged that some parents will bake bread for the little girl to exhibit at the school fair. Of course, that will be done as long as we are human, but let us try to eliminate it as much as we possibly can.*

Ontario Agriculture Ministry Speaker, 1916

Ontario, 1919



The annual picnic, held on the last day of school, June 30th, was greeted with great expectation. The races of every kind, such as catching a greased pig or rooster were entered by all with enthusiasm and gusto.

The afternoon would be taken up with married and older men challenging the school boys and girls and usually the teacher, in a game of baseball. The ball used was made by Mrs. Herve Johnson. She cut long strips of denim material, wrapped them into a tight ball and securely sewed them together with strong cord. This handmade ball was surprisingly hard and firm. The bat was an old sauerkraut chomper made of hardwood.

Red Deer School Division, Alberta, 1910
Schools of the Parkland

School outing,
Pilot Bay,
British Columbia

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Our only organized school sport at that time was softball. We usually put on a concert or something to raise money to buy one ball a year. We hewed our own bats out of the bush and beat the one ball to a mush. Then we would simply strip it, wind string, old cloth strips, binder twine or most anything, put the cover back and sew it up again.

Sports day consisted of a variety of foot races, high and broad jumping (for which we had no pits but simply picked a spot free of stumps or brush), novelty races such as sack race, egg-in-spoon race, wheelbarrow race, push-the-peanut-with-your-nose race, obstacle race, etc., followed

Above and below:
Ashcroft school picnic at Hat Creek Ranch, British Columbia, May 24, 1930

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by ball games – maybe between teams of adjoining schools, or students vs. parents. People brought picnic lunches, rushed home to do chores and have a bite of supper, then came back for the dance. Most people came with teams and wagons (sleighs in winter) or afoot. Such dances were so popular that often trappers came in from 50 to 75 miles for the big events. Sometimes they hiked out with one dog packed with their 'party clothes'. This may not seem part of the school system to you, but it does show how much the school was the centre of community life.

Richmond Park, Alberta, 1935
Clover and Wild Strawberries

Pemberton Meadow School, British Columbia, May 24, 1930

Visitors from the outside world

did drop in occasionally, usually on missionary errands, to break the isolation of life in a one-room school. The most important outsider was the inspector, sent out by the provincial departments of education usually in the fall and spring when travelling was easiest. Inspectors were sometimes a teacher's only contact with the larger world of education, and most of them tried to be helpful. But for all that, their visits worried teachers. One successful, honoured veteran said that to the last day she taught she never got over being nervous when the inspector arrived, though she knew she'd have nothing to fear from a visit.

It was a momentous occasion for everyone. The school board had ultimate control over a teacher's current job, but the inspector wrote a report on her competence that could affect both her job record and her certificate rating.

For the school board he represented the government that imposed regulations and controlled school grants. If he was displeased, he could cost them money. Inspectors could and did get action from trustees if they felt a school wasn't up to a reasonable standard, because they could recommend that a legislative grant be withheld.

And for the children, he was someone who asked unpredictable questions or wanted quick answers to tough sums, and who had better be pleased. If he was not,

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he might leave in his wake an unhappy teacher or dissatisfied parents who might make life more difficult for the children.

Besides that, he was sometimes the truant officer or back up tax collector; he might preside over exams, arbitrate local disputes, and serve as ministry of education public relations man, carrying their messages to the communities in his region.

Inspectors' reports covered the teacher's work, the condition of the school, community attitudes and problems, school attendance and the appearance of illnesses or disease.

One of the duties of a teacher outlined in 1896 was to help prevent the spread of disease by refusing admission to the school of any pupil affected with or exposed to a dreary list of horrors including smallpox, scarlatina, diphtheria, whooping cough, measles or mumps. Probably by the time she was aware that a pupil had been affected with or exposed to any of those things, it was too late to check the spread.

Even in a well-cared-for school, illnesses were passed along by way of the water dipper or the hand towel that everyone used, as well as by proximity. And in areas where there was no such thing as hot and cold running water, there were frequent winter outbreaks of things like head lice and scabies. One young city woman recalled that the children took the lice casually, and raced them, but she was terrified that she would get them.

Teachers sometimes tried doctoring up a child, if a complaint wasn't too serious, but many of them felt helpless in the face of some of the problems they saw. They weren't worse than problems in the city, but medical help and money to deal with them were harder to come by.

Teeth were neglected. It's a fairly recent thing to take any care at all of baby teeth. There was rheumatic fever that may have been encouraged by long cold walks through the snow and wet clothes and mitts. There were vision defects left uncorrected and aggravated by the bad light in schools. There were speech defects dismissed as unimportant, as baby talk.

In the 1930s and 1940s, public health nurses joined the outsiders who visited schools. They worked with the whole community, holding well-baby clinics, going into homes, talking to community groups. They were sent out by provincial governments, and they very often wooed the women's organizations because their help opened doors.

Usually they were welcomed, their basic program supported by the community, and in some cases community health committees were formed. The Women's Institutes and the IODE raised money to pay for a nurse's time, to pay for a dental clinic, to pay for glasses. They helped supply the school with food and milk and even extra handkerchiefs, paper towels, soap and a mirror.

The nurses normally visited a school a couple of times a year, and made extra calls if they were asked to. They'd set up shop behind a screen, behind the piano, or in the teacher's room while class went on in the background. Once they'd had a look at all the children they'd usually do a talk on basic health and hygiene and the importance of washing your hands, brushing your teeth, drinking milk and eating fruits.

One little boy now grown up remembered them fondly as plump, middle-aged ladies with a nice smile for the questions the children asked them.

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I left Madoc on the morning of September 7th, and next day I reached School Section Number Five, Bangor. The remainder of the afternoon I spent in the school. In the evening I met with the Trustees, and easily induced them to promise to erect, during the next summer, a more commodious and comfortable school house. In a day or two of travelling, Welshman's Landing, at the head of the Bay, was reached. There I found Mr. Wheland, one of the Trustees of the school at Bark Lake, waiting to convey me to my destination in his "Spring-board."

My tour extended over fifteen days. During this period I inspected fifteen schools, met with thirteen boards of Trustees, held one public meeting, formed one school section, and travelled over three hundred and twenty miles of colonization roads, bush, track and water.

Inspector's Report, Ontario, 1875

In the spring, the narrow gauge earth and gravel roads would heave from the winter's frost and until May they would be treacherous with sink holes and rough with bumps and hollows. Under these conditions, the inspector would take a room in the nearby village hotel and work over the schools in the surrounding countryside. Though his fall visit was usually a complete surprise up until a few minutes before his arrival, not so with his spring visit. For no sooner had he checked into the hotel than every teacher for miles around knew about it and began to prepare. Our jungle telegraph worked as efficiently as the modern day PA system.

Ontario, 1930

Our inspector drove a Model A Ford that back-fired like light artillery all the way down the steep incline. A boy near the door, previously coached, set out post haste to open the large wooden gate which it was always necessary to keep closed against unscrupulous cows that grazed the roadside. Finally, he found a way to silence the backfiring. By turning off the ignition he could coast down the hill for a silent descent. But what he had never before realized was that the usual salvo furnished the signal to open the school gate. When he arrived in silence the gate was closed, but he came right on anyway, announcing his arrival with the sounds of wood snapping and nails screeching.

He was interested in one thing, what did the pupils know? Did they know their tables? Did they know the counties and county towns? If someone missed a note, he would turn to the teacher and say, "These people don't know their geography," and the poor teacher would look like an ambushed doe and the pupils would try so hard to bail him out of his predicament. If only the inspector would ask the same questions he asked the day before yesterday in Miss Leggatt's school.

Ontario, 1935

Between Edmonton and Calgary, 1889

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Near Flin Flon, 1920s

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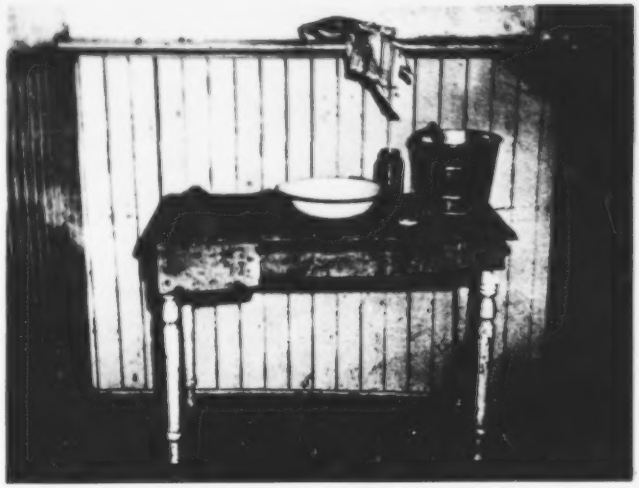
Many of the rooms were remarkably clean and neat, the majority in good order, but a few were absolutely dirty. Every room should be swept daily and in addition, thoroughly scrubbed out at least three times a year. At some schools I was told that they had not been scrubbed out for more than a year, and others were littered with rubbish.

The prevalence of infectious disorders during this year has drawn some attention to this matter, and has emphasized the fact that children cannot be healthy while living in an unhealthy room.

Nelson, B.C., 1900



Saskatchewan, 1948

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A couple of hundred years ago it was thought that everybody ought to have nits in their hair and body lice, because they thought it was a part of normal life. Our ancestors had them and not so very far back either. It is exactly so with these infectious diseases. Fifty years hence people will say as a curious reminiscence of the old days, "Do you know our ancestors back in 1915 had scarlet fever and whooping cough?" We can get rid of these things as our own ancestors got rid of nits and body lice. The younger the child is that has these diseases, the more sure he is to die.

The only thing a teacher can do is to keep tab of all the children, and when one of them shows itself a little off colour, the teacher should not waste three or four days until the rash comes out, but she should send that child home at once. The parents should support the teacher in doing it, and not jump on the teacher and say, "I don't want that kid home anyway."

A Member: In the winter time in the rural schools it is customary to have an open pail full of water for drinking purposes, and of course the dust and dirt gather in. Would it not be better if the school trustees could be compelled – if such a thing were possible – to have covered drinking vessels with a tap?

Dr. Backus: I see no reason why that should not be the law of the land. I believe it is now the law that tanks in the trains must be covered for the public safety, and they also are introducing the paper cups. Mothers must see to it that the schoolhouse has a closed drinking tank with individual cups.

Doctor's Speech, Ontario, 1916
Women's Institute Annual Report

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That's the seven year itch, a mite that gives you a skin rash. It was harder to avoid those things. Not many homes had bathrooms, few even had water pumped inside. People wore woollen underwear all winter. We used to think those mites could live in the clothes unless they were boiled. We tried to get people to go to the doctor; it's a communicable disease.

Ontario, 1940

About this time, children in the school were plagued by an epidemic of "the itch." Finally a delegation of mothers, along with Dr. Gillespie, attended a meeting of the board. The doctor ordered the school closed for several days and wrote a formula for the cure on the blackboard. Each child took home a copy to his parents. The building was thoroughly fumigated and when classes resumed, the doctor was at the door to examine every child. Anyone still showing symptoms was sent home to further pursue the course.

Alberta, 1920

Saskatchewan, 1948

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9 The role and status of the rural teacher

was a chancy thing, dependent on the prosperity and attitudes in one small community. She might be a respected member of that community, or considered just another hired hand, not as much use as an experienced farm hand. If the community was friendly and supportive, life was pleasant. If it was indifferent or hostile, the loneliness could be corrosive.

The country school teacher occupied a special place in the community; besides being a teacher, she was expected to be a model person setting an example for all the class and the community. The responsibilities of the teacher were many and varied, covering such things as checking on horsemanship and horseplay; should the class go home early because of a coming storm; doing the best job of teaching with the available library and lab equipment; being diplomatic with the school board; checking on the progress of a game of hide and seek.

An Ontario teacher's feelings about her daily life during the 1930s and 40s are fairly typical. "I usually walked in about a mile to school. In winter I wore galoshes that buckled up to the knees, and a woolen snow suit. Occasionally I got a ride home.

"It could be lonely. You were pretty much on your own. If you were ambitious you read. There was a lack of incentive. As long as you did a reasonably good job and

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pleased the parents, you were okay. You were very close to the children and parents. They weren't just numbers, the human relationship was important.

"I think if you were feeling right within yourself, you were all right, and if you had a good boarding home. My boarding homes were fine. The rooms I had for myself were good, and I was treated as part of the home."

Teachers boarded in the communities where they taught, at least until the years when some came to own cars. That was sometimes a condition of employment, written into the contract. They didn't choose their boarding homes, the community did, and they could be hard to take, ill-kept and poor beyond community standards. In later years the problem was compounded by the gap in living standards between town and country. Young teachers accustomed to city facilities had trouble adjusting to outhouses and chilly bedrooms.

The community also decided how much board the teacher would pay, and, like her salary, it could have conditions attached. A teacher who worked in Alberta during the Depression didn't pay any board, as that was part of her pay for teaching. The family she lived with got coal instead of money for her board, and the person who supplied the coal got a school tax credit.

In the Prairies teachers lived in teacherages on the school grounds. They were small houses that were sometimes little better than shacks, lonely, isolated and cold. Young women on their own for the first time in those miniature homes needed some courage to face Prairie storms or animals or unlikely looking strangers. A retired inspector commented, in a fine display of faint praise, that the teacherages had one advantage over boarding houses, they didn't have bed bugs.

Teacher turnover was always a problem for rural schools. Unless they wanted to be in reach of their families or a boyfriend, teachers changed schools often, in search of better pay and working conditions, or just a change of scenery.

But if the boards had to worry about whether a teacher would stay, the teachers had to worry as much about the boards, who had absolute control over their jobs. There was no job security. Teachers could be and were fired because someone didn't like them, or because the board wanted to hire someone cheaper. Not until the 1940s did governments and teacher organizations begin to establish

enforceable standards in teacher contracts, and the rural areas were the last places where they had any effect.

Until then, teachers bid on jobs, hoping to undercut one another, and haggled over the number of extra duties they were willing to perform. The practice was at its worst during the Depression, when there were hundreds of applicants for every available job.

"A real problem existed in the selection of a teacher during the thirties. In 1935, following the receipt of a large number of applications, the Moose River School Board was faced with the task of selecting one application. Just how should this be done? The four trustees read the letters. These contained a handwritten application, copies of several recommendations, as well as copies of inspectors' reports. Each member picked an application. Now how

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St-Adolphe, Québec

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should just one be chosen? In true sporting fashion the four applications were placed under a blanket. An outsider was asked to pull one."

One of the ways rural boards saved money was to hire teachers with a minimum of training. People could teach with what was called a letter of permission. For that all they needed was a board willing to hire them.

For many years the education departments offered all kinds of courses to apply a little training after the fact. There were county model schools that offered a few weeks' practice, there were part-time courses, summer courses, and the Teacher Institute. Those provided professional enrichment with a heavy helping of uplift. Most teachers say the best thing about them was that they gave rural teachers a chance to meet one another and talk things over. Farmers recall them as the weekend the kids could help harvest the potatoes. You planted them the 24th of May and pulled them up around Thanksgiving time, while the teacher was at the Institute.

Another thing rural boards did to save money was hire women as teachers. It was largely economics that made elementary school teaching a woman's job almost as soon as the roughneck, frontier era was over.

As early as 1851, J. B. Meilleur, Quebec's chief superintendent of education noted: "The number of schools taught by females exceeds, in a small degree, the half of the whole number of schools. The reason of this is, that their services can be had at rates which bear much more lightly on the rate payers."

By the 1880s statistics in "Ontario Teacher" showed rural salaries from $359 to $484 a year for men and $262 to $399 a year for women, big differences for a rural board to consider.

During both World Wars the proportion of women teachers rose dramatically, and in 1918 a B.C. inspector was viewing the situation with alarm.

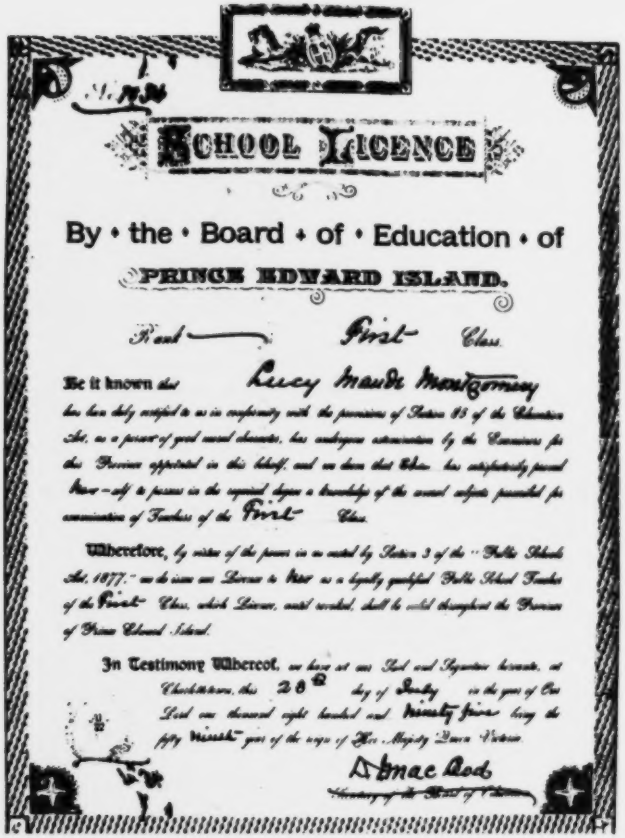
"In the rural schools for some years past, and now since the outbreak of the war, in the urban schools as well, we have witnessed the passing of the male teacher. When the young schoolmasters return from the battlefields of Europe – as God grant they all will – how many will return to their old vocation in the classroom under present living conditions? Does the average rural school with salary and living conditions attached hold out any inducements to the returned men? The question which should engage the most earnest consideration of the educational authorities in every Province in Canada at this very hour is not only how can the position of public or high school teacher be rendered attractive to the returned men who have been trained for the teaching profession, but how can we also recruit from the ranks of all returned men prospective schoolmasters who may be induced to fill this breach which threatens to weaken the whole educational structure?"

Both men and women were expected to set sterling moral examples for their young charges, and as rural teachers had all the privacy a goldfish has, their behaviour had to stand up under 24 hour surveillance. No deviation from accepted standards was too small to worry about. "I am not sure which inspector thought my long, brown divided riding skirt, made of corduroy, and my spurs, was not a suitable costume for this classroom, but I could not bring a dress, there was no place to change in a one-room school."

As late as the 1940s a teacher was reprimanded for smoking in a schoolroom while the children were outdoors at lunchtime. In the 1930s a teacher in Alberta worried because the board's secretary arrived unexpectedly at her home when she and her husband were drinking home-made wine. Drinking was one of a number of things that women teachers didn't do.

"One lady teacher at Cochrane, Ontario had gone with a gentleman friend for a day at a small place down line. But they missed the train back and she had to stay overnight with some of his friends. She was almost barred from teaching, and we had quite a time to get it settled." But for all that, it was a cheerful enough life for a young woman who fitted into her community. She had a degree of status and respect. She was independent. She could enjoy the community's social life.

Sometimes a lively young teacher could become the belle of a small community, someone new for the local boys to flirt with. One recalled a notable evening when four young men came calling, each with a spare horse for her to ride. She went out with the enterprising one who slipped around to the back door to get away from the competition. That was one reason for the brisk turnover of teachers in rural schools. Matrimony claimed them. A community in Ontario once had eight former teachers living in it, all wives of farmers.



SCHOOL LICENCE

By • the • Board • of • Education • of

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND.

Read ——— First Class.

Be it known that Lucy Maud Montgomery

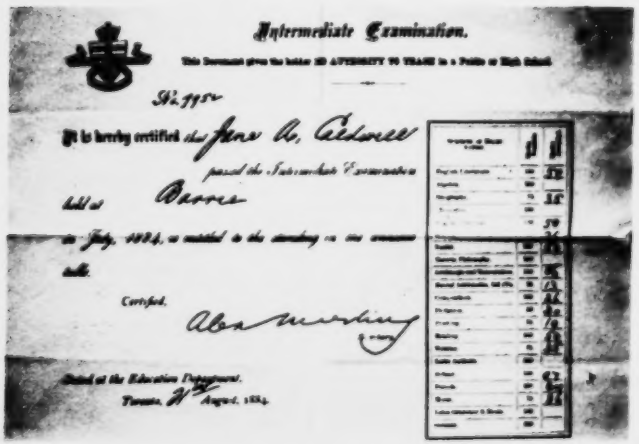
has been duly certified to us in conformity with the provisions of Section 83 of the Education Act, as a person of good moral character, has undergone examination by the Examiners for the Province appointed in this behalf, and on them that She has satisfactorily passed Her — off to possess in the required degree a knowledge of the several subjects prescribed for examination of Teachers of the First Class.

Wherefore, by virtue of the powers in us vested by Section 3 of the "Public Schools Act, 1877," we do issue our Licence to Her as a legally qualified Public School Teacher of the First Class, which Licence, until revoked, shall be valid throughout the Province of Prince Edward Island.

In Testimony Whereof, we have set our Hand and Signature hereunto, at Charlottetown, this 28th day of July in the year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred and Ninety four being the fifty Ninth year of the reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria

Isaac Reed

Secretary of the Board of Education



Intermediate Examination.

This Certificate gives the holder NO AUTHORITY TO TEACH in a Public or High School.

No. 995

It is hereby certified that Jane A. Aldcroft passed the Intermediate Examination at Ottawa in July, 1884, as entitled to the standing on the examination roll.

Certified.

Dated at the Education Department, Toronto, 30th August, 1884.

The lack of money for schools has degraded common [elementary] school teaching from a regular business to the mere matter of convenience to transient persons or common idlers, whereby the minds of the youth of this province are left without due cultivation or what is worse, frequently with vulgar low-bred, vicious and intemperate examples before them in the persons of their teachers.

Dr. Charles Duncombe
Upper Canada, 1831

It is, therefore, the bounden duty of the teacher to train his pupils in all those elements, which contribute to the formation of a good character. He should feel his responsibility for the inculcation of the many virtues that grace childhood, such as kindness, neatness, order, industry, obedience, truthfulness, honesty, politeness, patriotism, etc., and he should recognize it to be as much his duty to have his pupils as familar with the Golden Rule as with the Multiplication Table.

The teacher has it in his power to so deeply engrave a knowledge of the difference between good and evil upon the minds of his pupils that it will remain throughout life.

British Columbia, 1896

Selections of poetry and prose inculcating reverence, love of country, love of nature and admiration of moral courage are to be committed to memory and recited.

Alberta Department of Education, 1910

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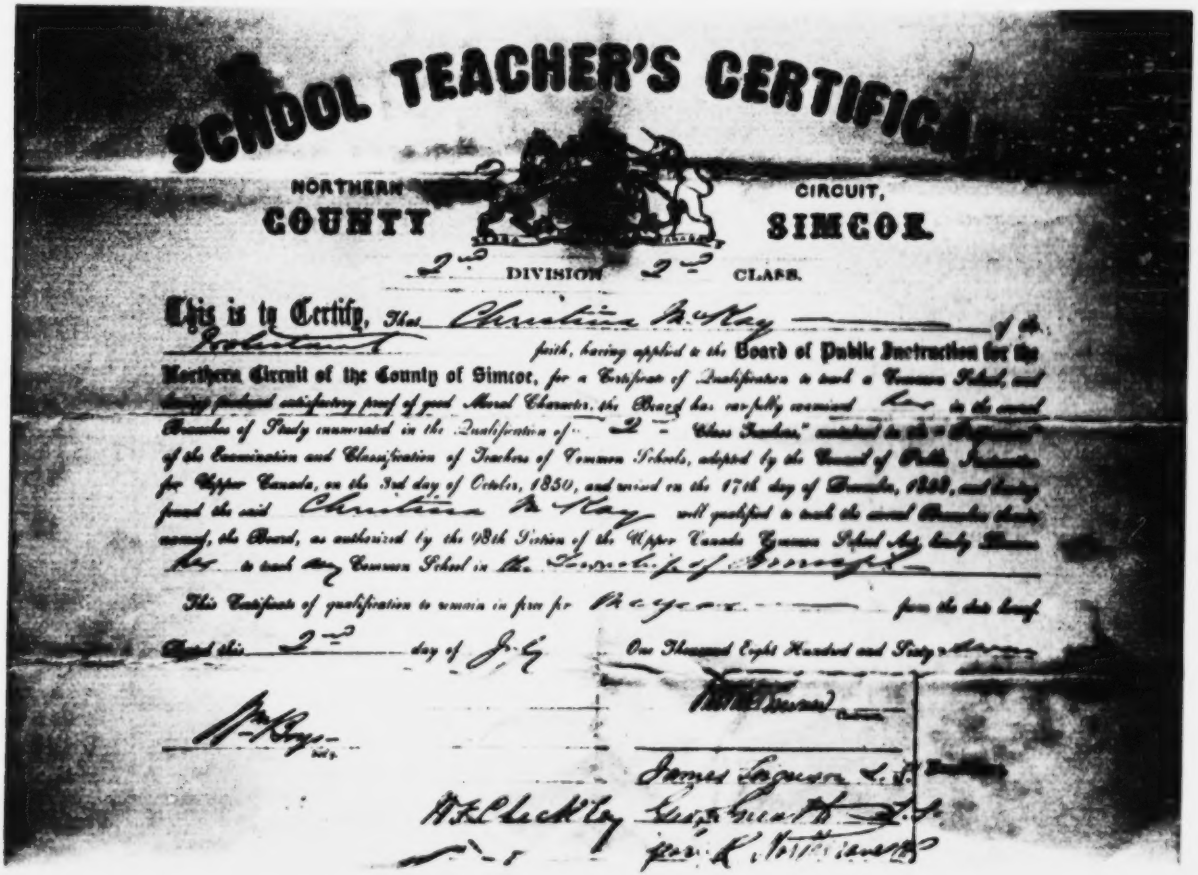
SCHOOL TEACHER'S CERTIFICA

NORTHERN CIRCUIT,

COUNTY SIMCOE.

2nd DIVISION 2nd CLASS.

This is to Certify, That Christina B. Kay of the Protestant faith, having applied to the Board of Public Instruction for the Northern Circuit of the County of Simcoe, for a Certificate of Qualification to teach a Common School, and having produced satisfactory proof of good Moral Character, the Board has carefully examined her in the several Branches of Study enumerated in the Qualification of 2nd Class Teachers" contained in the Regulations of the Examination and Classification of Teachers of Common Schools, adopted by the Council of Public Instruction for Upper Canada, on the 3rd day of October, 1850, and varied on the 17th day of December, 1853, and having found the said Christina B. Kay well qualified to teach the several Branches therein named, the Board, as authorized by the 98th Section of the Upper Canada Common School Act, hereby license the said Christina B. Kay to teach any Common School in the Township of Essa

This Certificate of qualification to remain in force for Two years from the date hereof.

Dated this 2nd day of July One Thousand Eight Hundred and Sixty

It shall be the duty of every teacher of a Public School to teach diligently and faithfully all the subjects in the Public School course of study; to maintain proper order and discipline in his school; to encourage his pupils in the pursuit of learning; to inculcate, by precept and example, respect for religion and the principles of Christian morality and the highest regard for truth, justice, love of country, humanity, benevolence, sobriety, industry, frugality, purity, temperance, and all other virtues.

Ontario Public School Act, 1896

Teacher wanted for rural school, all grades, and caretaking; willing to mind lending-library evenings and Saturdays; also take Sunday School class and play organ for church services. Protestant required; female preferred. Salary to be negotiated. Apply in own writing giving experience and name of last inspector.

Ontario, 1933

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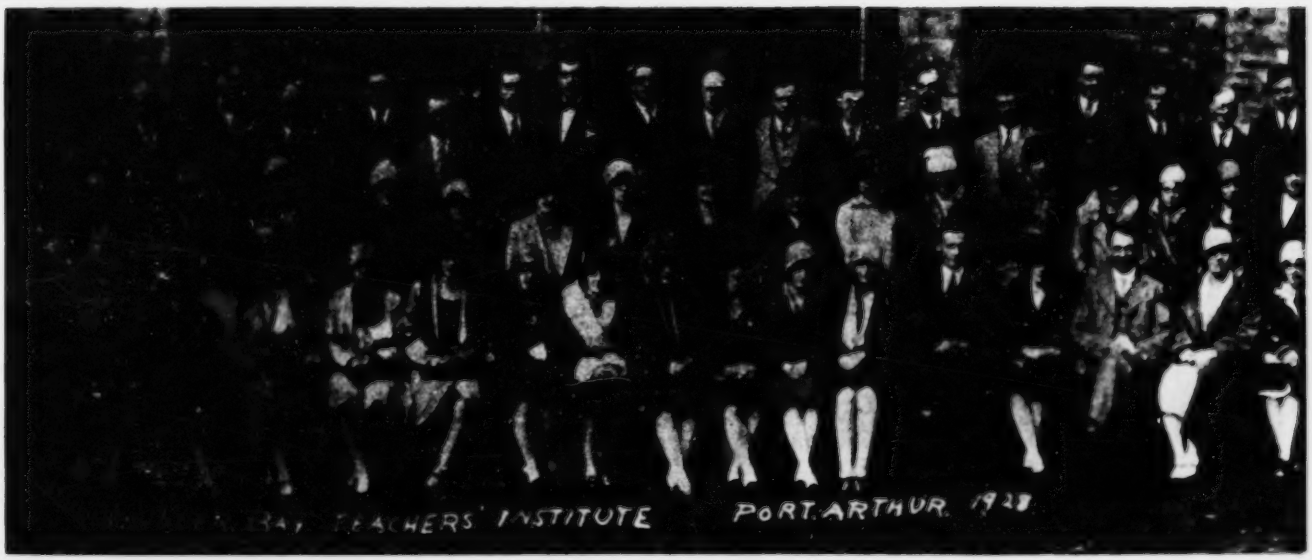
Above: Teachers' Convention, New Liskeard, Ontario, 1917



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Teachers Wanted

Public Schools.

SCHOOL BOARDS ADVERTISING FOR teachers are requested to state name of county in which schools are situated. Applicants want to know.

A TEACHER WANTED FOR U. S. S. No. 15, Artemesia and Proton; duties to commence Jan. 5, 1920; salary $800.00; state qualification, experience and religion to the Secretary; this school is well situated for railway, church and postoffice accommodation. Address or phone Abe Sherson, Proton Station, Ont.

AT NORTHPORT VILLAGE—$800—qualified Protestant teacher; duties commence Jan. 5; salary $700 to $800; about thirty pupils; phone in residence. Walter Robinson, Sec.-Treas., Northport.

A TEACHER HOLDING SECOND-CLASS certificate is wanted for S. S. No. 7, Asphodel; school not large; near village of Norwood; daily mail, telephone; salary $700. Apply to Richard Lees, P. S. Inspector, Peterboro'.

ART SUPERVISOR WANTED — APPLICATIONS will be received by the undersigned until January 12, 1920, for an art teacher to take charge of the art work in the Sault Ste. Marie public schools; give testimonials, qualifications and experience. Miss Gibson, Educational Secretary, Sault Ste. Marie, Ont. 136

A QUALIFIED TEACHER AS PRINCIPAL Hawkestone Public School; third and fourth classes; duties to commence Feb. 1st; salary $800; Hawkestone is nicely situated on Grand Trunk and Lake Simcoe. Apply Thos. A. Stone, Secretary-Treasurer.

CATHOLIC TEACHER HOLDING A second-class certificate; capable of teaching both English and French at a salary of $600 is wanted for S. S. No. 22, Charlottenburgh, on Jan. 5th, 1920. Chas. Labelle, South Lancaster.

EXPERIENCED PROTESTANT teacher; first or second class; for S. S. No. 3, Trafalgar township, county of Halton; duties to commence January 1st, 1920. Apply, stating salary, to W. B. Dent, Sec.-Treas., Trafalgar, Ont.

EXPERIENCED TEACHER WANTED with first or second class certificate, for S. Sec. No. 1, Humberstone, Welland county; salary $800 per year; duties to start February first. Fletcher Shark, Sec.-Treas., R. R. No. 1, Sherkston, Ont.

EXPERIENCED TEACHER WANTED for Wellesley four-roomed public school; teaching senior second and junior third class work; minimum salary $675.00; duties to commence Jan. 5th, 1920. Apply, stating experience, qualification, with testimonial, C. F. Ottmann, Wellesley, Ont. b

FOR PEMBROKE PUBLIC SCHOOL—a teacher holding at least a second-class certificate: initial salary $700.00;

Public Schools.

SASKATCHEWAN TEACHERS' Agency, Regina, obtains highest salaries for teachers.

SUPERINTENDENT WANTED—POSITION of superintendent of Regina Public Schools vacant; staff, 140; pupils, 5,000; splendid position for right man. Apply, with credentials, to J. M. Cunningham, Secretary, Regina.

TEACHER WANTED—FOR S. S. NO. 7, May, holding third class certificate; salary $525 per annum; duties to commence on January 5th, 1920; small section. Apply to W. E. Tracey, Massey, Ont.

TWO LADY TEACHERS WANTED FOR Port McNicoll Public School; one for primary and one for junior third classes; second-class certificate; salary for start $650.00; duties to commence Jan. 5th, 1920. Apply J. T. Hatford, Sec.-Treas.

TEACHER FOR S. S. NO. 8, CALEDON, second-class pro; salary $700.00; duties to commence January 5, 1920. Apply to John McCormick, Sec.-Treas., Caledon

TWO ASSISTANT TEACHERS FOR Almonte Public School; commence January 5th; state qualifications and experience and salary desired. Address Dr. Hanly, Chairman Com., Almonte.

TEACHER—PROTESTANT — PROFESSIONAL, for S. S. No. 4, Clarke township (village school); duties to begin January 5; state salary expected and experience. Apply Fred Smith, Sec., Clarke P. O., Ont.

THREE HUNDRED QUALIFIED teachers required by us for Saskatchewan and Alberta schools, opening at New Year's; Principalships, graded, village and rural appointments; salaries one thousand to eighteen hundred per annum; prompt and efficient service; full particulars each position supplied. Apply at once, stating qualifications, to Canadian Teachers' Agency, Box 14, Regina, Sask.

TEACHER WANTED — RURAL schools; at one thousand a year; wire or write. P. H. Thibaudeau, B. A., Inspector of Schools, Stettler, Alta.

TEACHER WANTED FOR S. S. NO. 9, Stamford, Welland county; duties to commence Jan 5th, 1920; salary $650 up according to qualifications and experience. H. Williams, Sec.-Treas., R. R. No. 2, Niagara Falls South, Ont.

TEACHER WANTED—MALE OR FEMALE—Protestant, for the Mattawa Public School, holding a second-class certificate; duties to commence January 5th, 1920; salary $850. W. H. Meredith, Secretary-Treasurer.

TEACHER WANTED—FIRST OR SECOND; seven-fifty. Phone Inspector Liddy, Orangeville.

Public Schools.

WANTED TEACHER — QUALIFIED Protestant preferred; to teach S. S. No. 8, Sandwich South, Essex county; salary $700; duties commence Jan. 5. Apply Wm. Nagoreen, R. R. 3, Maidstone.

WANTED—PROTESTANT TEACHER—male or female, for S. S. No. 5; first or second class certificate; duties commencing after Christmas holidays; personal application preferred; give references and state experience; state salary wanted and give long-distance phone. Apply P. H. Lowrey, St. David's, Ont. Phone 476, r 2, Niagara Falls.

WANTED — PROTESTANT TEACHER for School Section ... of St. Vincent township, Grey county, third-class certificate; duties commence Jan. 6; state salary. Alfred Bumstead, Woodford, No. 4, Meaford; Phone 22-11.

WANTED—TEACHER WITH NORMAL certificate for School Section No. eleven, Oro; duties to begin soon as possible after new year; school is within five minutes walk of G. T. R. station, postoffice and church. Apply immediately, stating qualifications, experience and salary required, to R. O. Bell, Secretary, Ora Station P. O., Ont.

WANTED — PROTESTANT TEACHER holding first or second class certificate, for S. S. No. 26, Chinguacousy, Peel county; salary $800; duties to commence January 5th. Apply, stating qualifications and experience, to H. A. Maltby, Secretary, R.R. No. 1, Malton.

WANTED — PROTESTANT TEACHER for School Section No. 2, McDougall; duties commence Jan. 5. State salary and qualification to James Hardie, Secretary, Hurdville, Ont.

WANTED—THREE TEACHERS FOR schools in Peterborough West and Victoria East; limited third (temporary); salary $650 to $700, according to experience. Apply, giving phone connection, to G. H. Broderick, L. P. S., Lindsay.

WANTED — QUALIFIED TEACHER for Bannockburn Public School; duties to commence Jan. 5, 1920; salary $700.000. A. W. Hunter, Secretary, Bannockburn.

WANTED—FEMALE TEACHER FOR primer classes in Niagara Public School; holding second-class professional certificate; minimum salary $650, with graded increase; applicant state teaching experience and give references; duties to commence as soon as possible. Address applications to the Secretary, Public School, Box 14, Niagara-on-the-Lake. 3...

WANTED — PROTESTANT—ASSISTANT lady teacher for Markdale High School; duties to commence at once. Apply, stating experience, qualifications and salary expected, to Miss E. E. Matson, Secretary, Markdale, Ont.

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In August, 1903, after teaching school in my home Province of Nova Scotia for three years, I left by excursion train to take up teaching in the Canadian Northwest. I was twenty-one years old, and filled with the spirit of adventure. My ticket was for Moose Jaw, but when we arrived at Wolseley, Saskatchewan in the early morning, knowing there was a Teachers' Agency there, I was so train sick, I decided to go no further.

Through the Agency I arranged to teach the Mound Lake School, which was thirty-six miles out from Red Deer, the nearest Post Office.

According to arrangements, I was in front of the hotel just before eight in the morning to begin my drive to the country. Since the bar-rooms were about to open there was a group of men waiting for their morning's refreshments. When I looked up to the top of the double box wagon, I wondered just how to get there. But I was a resourceful gal and we were soon on our way. There were no roads, just prairie trails and mud holes nearly all of the way. It snowed and rained intermittently all day. Wagons for some reason were called spring seat wagons, but there were no springs under that seat for I tested it from eight in the morning until six-thirty.

Most of the thirty-one children had been out of school for at least two years, and spent the time chasing gophers and butterflies, as free as the air. Some were from Ontario and others from different parts of the United States. They had no books and under these circum-stances, the setting up of work was most difficult. In about three weeks, a settler went to Red Deer and brought back the school Manual and register, and some school books, and we were able to get to work in earnest. My salary was $50 a month.

Mound Lake School, Alberta, 1903

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Prairie town, 1900s

I had never been north of the river and had never taught before and had no idea of what was ahead of me. I met Jakey at the Post Office one summer afternoon. He drove an old Model T truck. It took about two hours of bumping and pitching and stopping and backing up for a run at it, and bouncing and bucking to get to Deep Creek where we spent the night at Gislasons. Next morning early I went out to get into the truck again but was informed that we would have to go in by horseback since the only trail up was not passable until after freeze-up. So I dug two pillow cases out of my trunk, packed them with clothing and a few books, held the violin case in my hand, and mounted old "Sandy." Thirty-three miles and eleven hours later we arrived at the small log structure which was to be my first school. Needless to say I took my breakfast standing.

School there was open for eight months a year – spring, summer, and fall – but closed during the coldest part of the winter. There were 13 white children and up to 12 Indian children, but the latter were in attendance only occasionally – between the various trips out to a variety of trapping expeditions, or camp trips.

Calling Lake, Alberta, 1930

In 1934 when I was job-hunting, I applied for everything advertised, day after day. I received two replies from the dozens of applications that I wrote. One of the two hired me from the 50 applications that they bothered to read. (They had received hundreds of applications but decided to pick out 50 at random and burn the rest unopened). After a four hour deliberation by a three man trustee Board, I was selected by the skin of my teeth over another applicant because I held a First Class Certificate and, therefore, could be called upon to teach Grades 9 and 10. The bids on the job started at $325 and for every dollar more than the lowest bid, the teacher haggled and agreed to perform extra services. The extra services were written into the contract. I agreed to tend the fires from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

I well remember one young girl who, to get her first job, agreed to provide the winter's supply of wood – from her father's bush – without cost to the trustees, of course. Her father was willing to cut, haul, and pile the wood to get his daughter her first job. How much closer to extortion can you come than that? That same girl is still teaching, and I doubt very much that she buys the fuel oil!

Ontario Teacher, 1934

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Gough Lake School,
Alberta, 1918

We'd usually have lunch with the teacher. We depended on them to let us know if they were concerned about anything. And by the beginning of the second year, we recognized that these young teachers landed out in these schools in the back areas were sometimes desperately lonely. All you had to do often was say to the teacher, "And how are you getting along?" and boy, you'd get an earful. They were homesick, sick of the job, breaking down. I remember a brother and sister who'd never been away from home before, no one to talk to, until the inspector came.

Public Health Nurse
Ontario, 1940

Frank Vigar engaged Miss Tilley Tingley, the first teacher, who had come west from her homeland in New Brunswick for health reasons. As it happened a school out in the prairies was where she wanted to teach, and to live out more or less a summer in the open high-altitude air. She was engaged at $35.00 a month and was charged $15.00 a month for room and board. In her second year, Miss Tilley bought an Indian pony to ride from Dick Shaw at the H. B. Biggs ranch for $40.00, including a nice side-saddle. There was no charge for the horse's room and board. She made her own riding habit.

Severn Creek School, Alberta, 1903
History of Severn Creek Public School No. 852

Even as a kid I couldn't understand how a teacher could do it, live out in the middle of nowhere. There was no such thing as a bedroom or a living room, that was just a waste of lumber, it was just one room, though this one had a sod house beside it for keeping ice. Why they ever put that at the school I have no idea.

Still it was an honour to be invited into the teacher's home. You knew you'd either been very good or very bad.

I sometimes used to walk to the teacherage on days when there was no school. It was a long way, but no one objected. I think they felt someone had to visit the teacher.

Student,
Saskatchewan, 1940

I boarded in a home where there was the man and woman, two children, two hired men, a hired girl, grandma and grandpa, and me. We played Lost Heir until it came out our ears.

Radios were just coming in, and they got one. Grandfather used to listen to hockey games on Saturday night, and thought it was wonderful. He missed out on television, but he loved that radio. They didn't have hydro until after I left; the radio had a great big battery, like a car battery that had to be charged regularly.

Teacher,
Ontario, 1938

I boarded the first two years for $4.00 weekly at a farm home next to the school. To begin with, I was provided with a beautiful spacious downstairs bedroom. The people there kept a large flock of turkeys that roosted at night in the orchard trees outside my bedroom window. When these birds would be disturbed they would utter a series of gobbles that always reminded me of someone enjoying a good joke.

The Grandmother came to live with the family and was given the downstairs bedroom. So I spent the second year of my stay with them sharing an upstairs bedroom and slept with the daughter in a room a quarter the size. My desk was placed on a landing at the head of the stairs and became a meeting place for the whole family on their way to and fro. This was not as private, and a longer way outside to the facilities.

The Aunt was coming to live with them, the next year. So, not knowing where I would be moved to, I decided to re-locate myself. I did what teachers didn't do in those days. I changed boarding places, moving in to the farmhouse on the opposite side of the school. There were apparent hurt feelings but they soon disappeared and things proceeded normally. I enjoyed a very happy four years with this family, the baby daughter learned to walk and talk and was ready for school when I left for my next position.

Teacher
Ontario, 1939

Richfield teacherage, Saskatchewan, 1948

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A sleighing party at Aylmer, Quebec, 1905

Winter and broadcaster Kate Aitken taught at Cypress Hills, Saskatchewan, 1907

What about the teacher? How many times have you heard a mother say, "It is a pity we are losing this teacher on the 1st of January, because John and Lizzie and Kate never did so well and never wanted before to study at home, and never seemed to take so much interest in the work. I asked a mother the other day the question: "Why did you let that good teacher go? Why did the mothers of the municipality let her go?" and she said, "She is not our teacher; she comes from the Educational Department." My dear woman, she does not come from the Educational Department at all. She comes from the Normal School. I said, "We are not all managed by the Government in everything we do." She stopped to think, and it came over her at once that if the three trustees had been consulted and advised they might have paid that woman $50 when she had retained her services for another year. They let her go for $50 when she had forty children under her, growing up to bigger things and getting a start that was going to make them broad-minded men and women; and they had to settle down under a new teacher and try and tell her how little they knew in order that she would not give them too much to do. Children will do that. The older people must think for them. You have got to look after the teacher. When you get a good teacher don't let her go to another school section for the paltry sum of less than $1 a household. And yet we are doing that every day and thinking the Government is to blame.

Ontario Women's Institute Report, 1916

This school had frequent changes of teachers during the year. Very little progress could be noted in consequence. Present teacher appears to be doing satisfactory work.

I desire to impress upon trustees and votepayers that security of position is a reward to a faithful and efficient teacher which no local, economic or kinship reasons should be used to violate. Nothing more stifles the ardour of a teacher than to be faced with actual dismissal without proper and sufficient reasons therefore.

Harsville, P.E.I.
Inspector's Report

When Grandpa and Dad were getting their A B C's in central Alberta, nearly all administration policies were matters for the local school board. It hired the teachers, hired the janitor, built and kept in repair the schoolhouse. It advised the teacher when class was to begin, when holidays were to be celebrated, what subjects were to be taught, and which pupils were to pass or fail. One Penhold teacher was informed by the board, she was to give French to one pupil.

A teacher's tenure on staff was almost entirely at the whim of this governing body. Often the board Secretary was called upon to inform the master his services were no longer required. This bit of news could come after ten years, two years, one year or even six months of service.

Penhold District, Alberta
Schools of the Parkland

New Brunswick, date unknown

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10 Every piece has its villain

and in the case of the one-room school the trustees are sometimes cast for the role. They are seen as grim men, tight fisted, close minded, bullying teachers for sport. And undoubtedly, there were some like that. Life was hard, and some of the people in rural areas had little schooling or experience of the world beyond their communities to help them deal with running the school.

But most of them were conscientious men trying to do their best by everyone concerned. They were not remote politicians, meeting in some downtown boardroom. They were neighbours and parents, who held their meetings in the school, which many of them had attended. In a lot of cases they maintained the school themselves, putting on a roof, painting the windows, mowing the yard. If they didn't do that, they did their best to pay as little as possible to get the work done. Every cent they spent beyond their government grants came right out of their neighbours' pockets, and in cash-short rural areas, they made sure it was necessary before they raised a tax.

An inspector wrote in 1911: "The shortage of funds is largely accounted for by the unwillingness or inability of the secretary-treasurer to collect the taxes due to the district; he is not willing for evident reasons to distrain his neighbours' goods. That is, he prefers that the district should in many cases do without school to make an enemy of his neighbour by forcing him to pay taxes."

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A Meeting of the School Trustees, ***Robert Harris, National Gallery of Canada***

Trustees were elected at an annual meeting of the ratepayers. Generally they served three-year terms, and every year one member retired to be replaced by a new member. An Ontario farmer who was a trustee like his uncle and father before him, claimed you were usually railroaded into the post during the years your own kids were at the school.

Teachers were wary of the boards for good reason. Hiring was one of their major responsibilities, and so was firing and their decisions weren't always fair or based on predictable reasons.

They also controlled the amount of money a teacher had to buy supplies, and they pretty well governed her standard of living and standing in the community.

The trustees didn't have it all their own way, of course. Teachers could and did fight back, sometimes taking grudges out on the children. The community also kept an eye on the board's operations, and occasionally it became the centre of inflammable factional disputes, dividing people into pro and anti school board camps.

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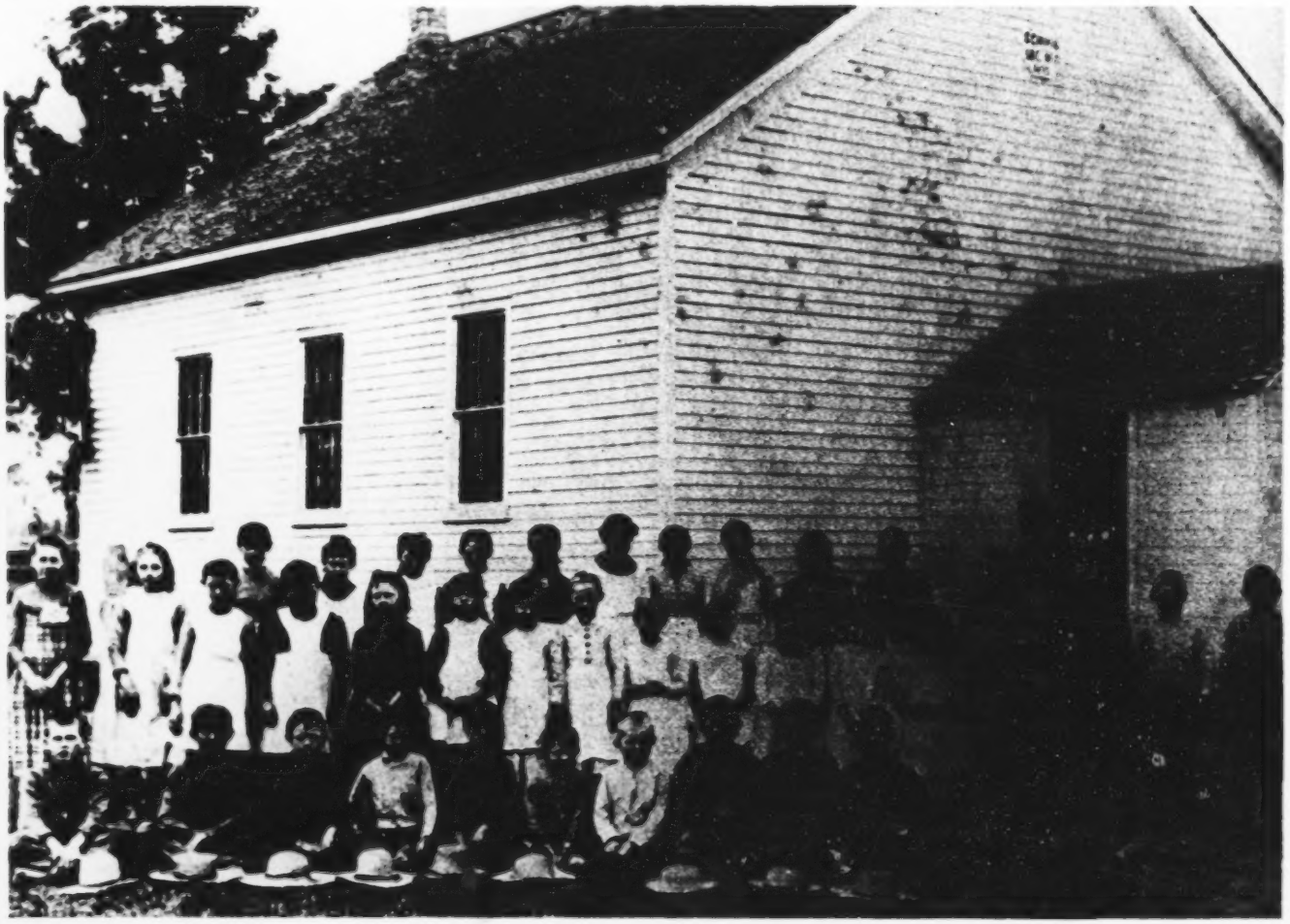
But not all trustees had to be bullied or cajoled or led by the hand through the simplest political maze. Hundreds of sensible people gave their time ungrudgingly to run the best school they could for their communities' young. The records of trustees' meetings in Aldborough township in southwestern Ontario provide a glimpse through a darkening window at the myriad concerns those small boards dealt with. They are a diary of one small school section that got underway in 1870 and operated in three successive buildings on the same grounds until it went out of operation in 1964, with only five children in attendance.

In nearly a hundred years, nothing was wasted, nothing was thrown away; but it's not just the frugality of the predisposable era that comes through, but the flashes of humour and the kindness and concern for neighbour, child and teacher.

Their first annual report indicated they paid $703 for a building site and interest, and $5.96 to repair the old house that had been moved onto the site to serve as a schoolhouse. The teacher got $175.25, and expenses were $85, including heat. The board's income came from a municipal grant of $14.17 and $854 in taxes.



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A wooden frame school was built and outgrown, then in 1890 a fine new school was built of yellow brick with gingerbread trim: "Moved that a box stove be purchased from Benj Partridge at a cost of $13. Mr. Partridge to be instructed to place said stove in position, also that he fix a pane of glass in window and provide an ash pail.

"It was found necessary to purchase a new stove as the old one was falling to pieces. Mr. Partridge was to take the old stove and value it as old iron.

"The well which has proven very unsatisfactory was also dealt with, but that also was held over until a later date."

This page: the second Argyle School, 1890s

Left: the first Argyle School, School Section No. 12, Aldborough Township, Ontario, built 1873

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Argyle School,
December, 1919

December 1, 1919: "A special meeting of the board of trustees was called this forenoon, this being necessary owing to the fact that the terrific windstorm on Saturday evening had completely wrecked the school building.

"Moved that a special meeting of the ratepayers of the section be called tomorrow at 9 p.m. to consider ways and means of carrying on the work of the school and also what disposition will be made of the debris."

December 2, 1919: "Dr. Ripley offered to rent the building on his farm near the school house to the section until a new building was erected, at $5.00 per month providing that the building would be left in good order.

"Moved that the trustees secure help to pick up bricks and pile them carefully for use in new building."

December 16, 1919: "Moved that trustees be authorized to remove timber of wrecked building and secure seats for temporary building.

"Moved that a bee be held on Monday afternoon next for above purposes."

December 31, 1919: "The auction sale of timber only, in school house was held immediately after annual meeting. Roy Jamieson was appointed auctioneer and after much persuasion on his part disposed of the timber, less front wall and lobby which is still standing, for eighty four dollars, no timber to be removed until settled for by cash or note at 30 days."

A new red brick schoolhouse opened on the same site in September, 1920.

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November 27,1911: "Ten applications were received for position of teacher and with the exception of the present teacher's, all were unqualified. After due deliberation, moved that the application of Miss Duncanson be accepted, her salary to be $550 inclusive of sweeping school room."

Annual Meeting, 1911: "At this part of the proceedings it was thought proper that a hearty vote of congratulations should be tendered the retiring trustee, this being his wedding day, and a motion put forth was carried amidst applause. After this pleasant departure in the proceedings the chairman..."

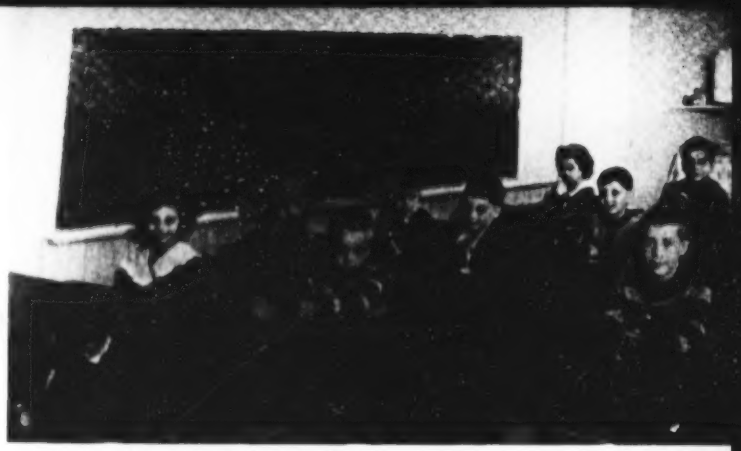
Annual Meeting, 1912: "Since last annual meeting, a change had taken place in the boundaries of the section, several ratepayers of the eastern side of the section having been placed in another section. Owing to this change it was moved that we the ratepayers of S.S. No. 12 note with regret that after a connection of over forty years with S.S. No. 12, several of our number have been forced to become a part of a new section. We sincerely regret the loss of these ratepayers and extend sympathy to them in the heavy expenses they will be called upon to bear in connection with the maintaining of a new school."

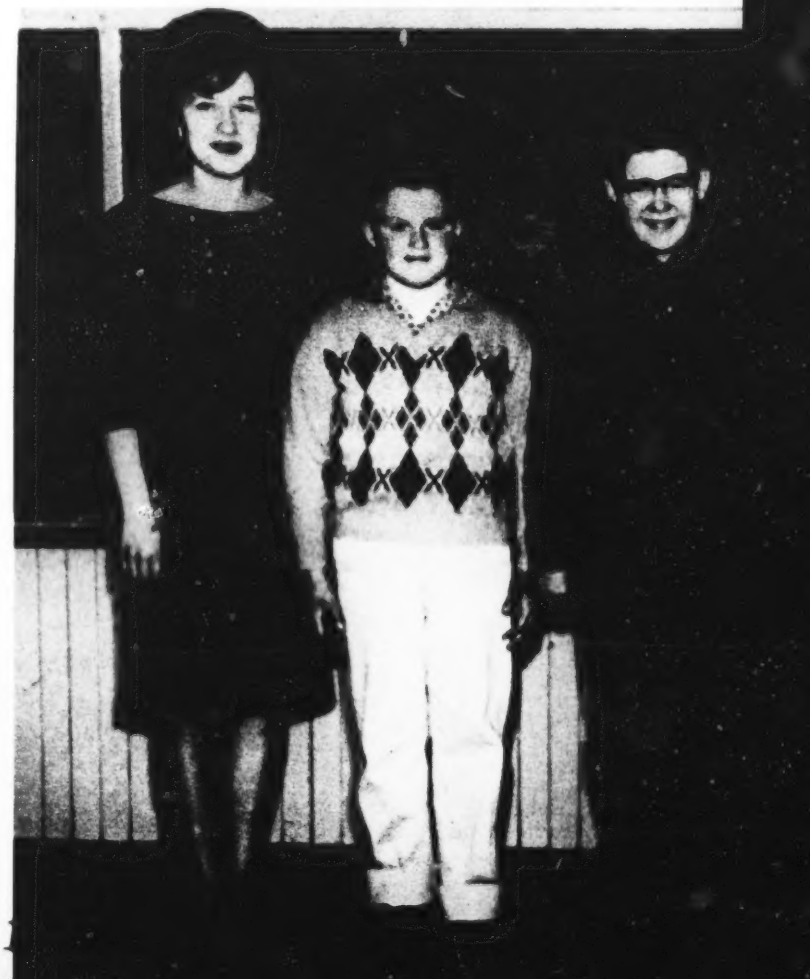
44th Annual Meeting, 1914: "On behalf of the Board of Trustees, W. Salter reported that an action for damages to a colt belonging to Jon A. McKillop alleged to have been entangled in wire fence surrounding school yard, was threatened by Mr. McKillop. After considerable discussion it was thought advisable by those present that Board of 1915 should make an attempt at an early date to settle said claim and avoid an action."

January 11, 1921: "That secretary be instructed to draw attention of teacher to complaints received by board from certain ratepayers as to apparent carelessness in her work. Moved that sec. be instructed to order necessary equipment required to bring same up to standard (alarm clock)."

1927: "Moved that Secretary write parents of the boys who shot through the basement window on Saturday, November 26."

1934: "Moved that Miss Stalker be asked to remain another year and be given one hundred dollar raise in salary providing she boards in the section during the week."





Above: Argyle School, 1940s
Below: The last class, 1964

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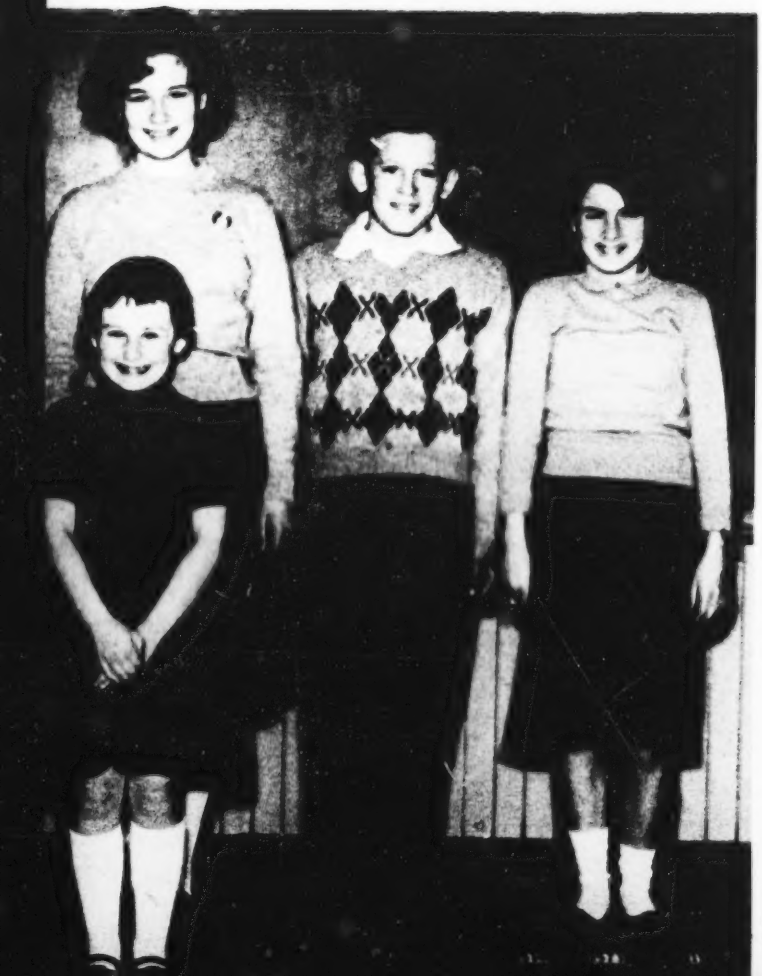

December 4, 1934: "That as on previous years, two ($2) dollars worth of oranges, candy and nuts be purchased for the pupils for Christmas."

January 22, 1940: "A special meeting of the section was held at the schoolhouse at 8 p.m. re installation of hydro in the school. A poll of the ratepayers is to be conducted at once."

September 4, 1944: "The secretary was instructed to send a registered letter to D. Smith as follows: I have been instructed by the trustees of S.S. No. 12 Aldborough to write you regarding wood which we bought from you for the school.

"The secretary reported to the school board that he agreed to buy only the pick of the pile of wood you had – mainly the body wood, chunks and larger wood, all small wood to be culled out. As you delivered the wood without culling it, it will be necessary for you either to make a new agreement with the board or remove the wood from the yard at once.

"If you wish to make arrangements to meet the trustees within 10 days and talk it over, I will arrange it.

"After 10 days of the date we will have to get other fuel and your wood will be in the schoolyard at your own risk."

December 25, 1945: "The 75th annual school meeting was held at the schoolhouse at 8 o'clock in the afternoon.

"Moved by J. Neil, Duncan McGill that the trustees be instructed to put hydro in the school according to the department of education's specifications as quickly as possible."

January 27, 1948: "That $12.45 being money from the Christmas concert be put in the bank and a cheque be drawn for hot plate and two cold packs for hot lunches."

The little school stayed open until 1964. There were only five children attending when fate inexorably caught up with it. And even then there were feelings in the community, as in thousands of others across the country, that this school, our school, should not have to be closed.

It was sold for $500 to a local entrepreneur, who held it until he could resell it to outsiders at a considerable profit.

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In the dry areas after six successive crop failures, the problem of continuing to offer educational services in any form has now been aggravated to the point of despair. Since the farming population is largely on relief, taxpaying is almost impossible.

The problem of financing rural education is hardly less difficult in the newly-organized districts of the central and northern inspectorates. Here relief settlers and homesteaders have a scant acreage, little farming equipment, and no opportunity of earning ready money from casual labour. Even when they erect a log house by community labour, they are often unable to finish the building without special assistance from the Government; and they usually have no further resources with which to equip the school or pay the salary of a teacher. Not a few of them are so indigent that they cannot send their children to school for lack of proper clothing.

Alberta, 1934

The inhabitants of the municipality did all they could to prevent and arrest the flames which, despite their efforts, destroyed their beautiful school house and six other houses.

These generous people are almost discouraged. They had hardly finished the building which they had erected by means of the greatest sacrifices, when the fire in a moment destroyed the fruits of their toil and devotion.

Under present circumstances, it is almost impossible that the inhabitants of Acton can, without help, erect a new school house.

The good will they have hitherto shewn, and the generous sacrifices they have made, to promote the operation of the law lead me to hope that they will obtain a liberal aid.

School Inspector
Quebec, 1851

Elora, Ontario

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A special meeting of the Board of Trustees was called this forenoon, this being necessary owing to the fact that the terrific windstorm on Saturday evening had completely wrecked the school building.

Inspector Taylor, while deploring the loss of the building, said it was too terrible to think of what might have happened had the accident occurred during school hours. He said by no possible means could any of the scholars or teacher escaped death or injury by the falling walls, and then the horror of being buried without a chance of rescue was to be added to this. He considered it only in the Providence of God that the meeting today was not held in sackcloth.

He said there were two main questions facing the ratepayers immediately, and they were, first to carry on the work of teaching the children until a new building should be erected, second, the work of securing a new up-to-date building because, said he, it will be a monument of those present and will still continue after all present have been laid away.

Aldborough Township, Ontario, 1919
Records of Argyle School

Cause for concern about the maintenance of adequately high standards of school education became, during 1934, much greater than it had been; arrears of taxes continued to accumulate and payments of current taxes decreased seriously; the majority of municipal districts were having to default on their payments to school districts on requisition accounts; many teachers had to go month after month without any payment from the school board or salary account; in many districts upkeep of school property had continued to be neglected; in many schools equipment and supplies had not been kept up to even minimum requirements; and regular attendance of children at school had become difficult of enforcement on account of the great increase in the number of families almost destitute because of repeated failure of crops. Administrative troubles were increasingly great during 1934.

Alberta, 1934
Inspector's report

Trustees in front of Papple's School, Blue Lake, Ontario, date unknown

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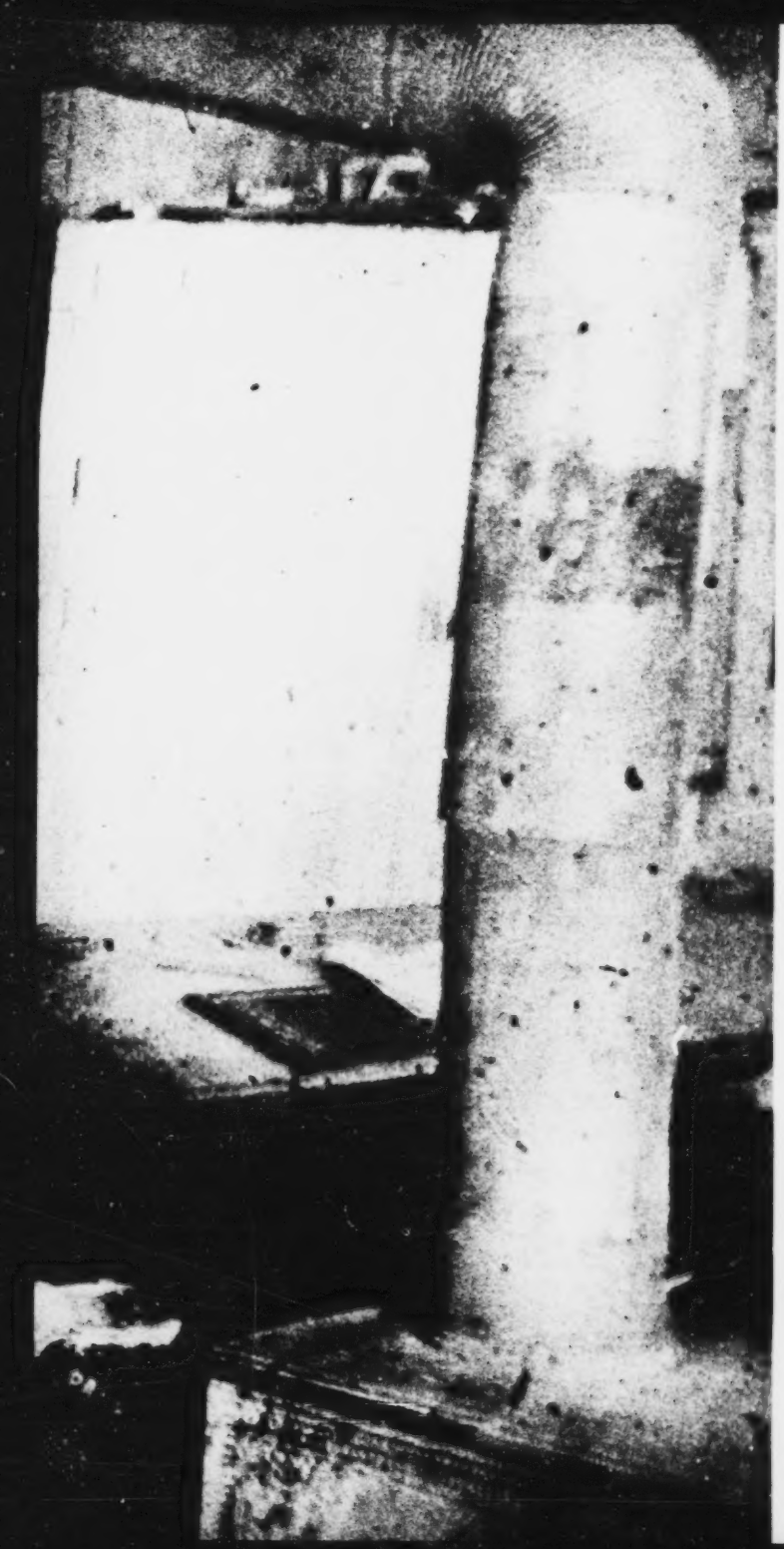

In order to teach my fifth class I just had to have some reference books, so I appealed to the Board of Trustees for permission to order books. I was told to bring my order with firm prices to the next meeting. The meeting convened by coal oil lantern light around the box stove on a sharp fall evening. No minutes were taken; nobody could see to write! I presented my order by lantern light. It came to $68. The Trustees were shocked. After much deliberation they asked me to cut it down to $50. and buy the balance next year. I was reluctantly agreeing when one trustee who had been sitting silently said "Wait a minute; I've been thinking! When I hire a man to fork hay, I give him a fork!" And I got my books!

Teacher
Ontario, 1930s

School interior, possibly York Factory, Manitoba

Rural school, Quebec, 1936

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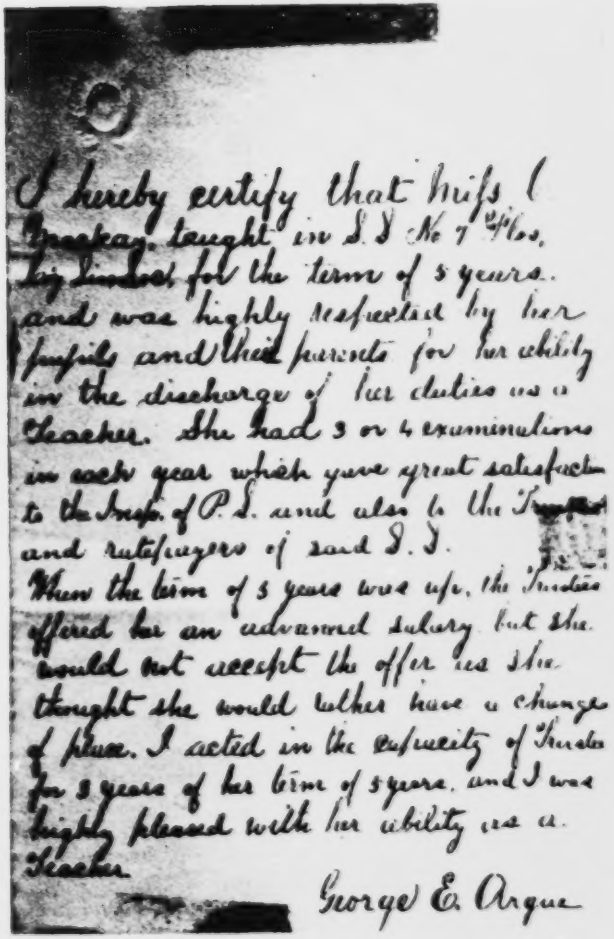
It was proposed that the Secretary notify the teacher, Mr. Jones on May 31st that his services will not be required after June 30th for the reason that the Trustees desire to have a married Male Teacher engaged during these strenuous times.

Masset, B.C. 1917

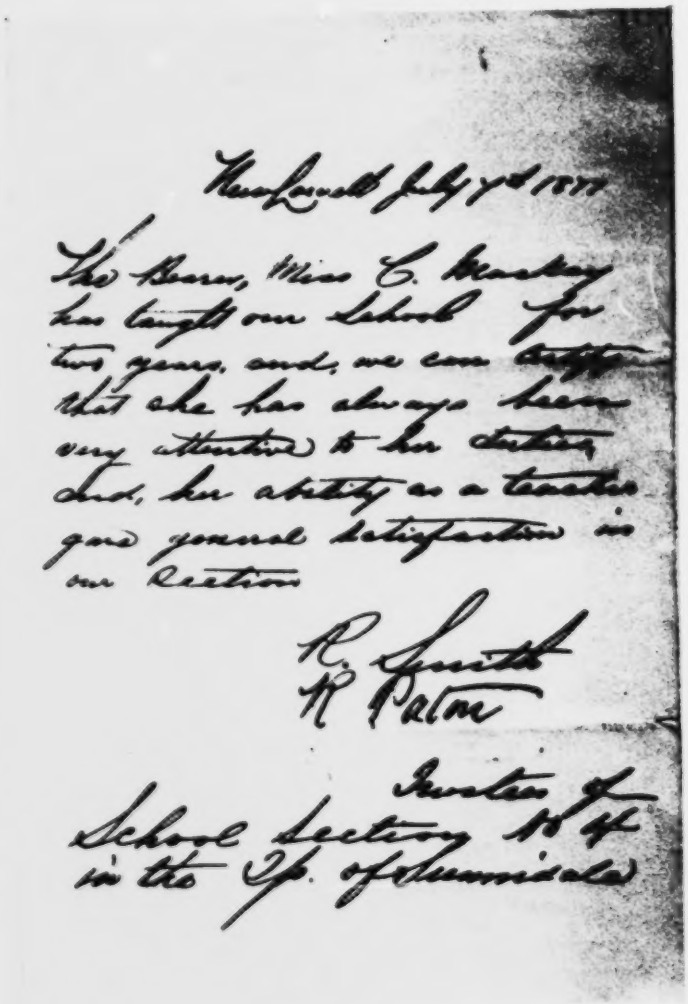
The teacher is very much the creature of the board. They know full well that she is farmer Brown's daughter and from her not much can be expected.

Prince Edward Island, 1941



I hereby certify that Miss [redacted] Breakey taught in S.D. No 7 [redacted] Township for the term of 5 years. and was highly respected by her pupils and their parents for her ability in the discharge of her duties as a Teacher. She had 3 or 4 examinations in each year which gave great satisfaction to the Insp. of P.S. and also to the Trustees and ratepayers of said S.D. When the time of 5 years was up, the Trustees offered her an advanced salary but she would not accept the offer as she thought she would rather have a change of place. I acted in the capacity of Trustee for 3 years of her time of 5 years. and I was highly pleased with her ability as a Teacher.

George E. Argue



New Lowell July 1st 1911

This is to certify that Miss E. Beasley has taught our School for two years, and we can testify that she has always been very attentive to her duties and, her ability as a teacher gave general satisfaction in our section

R. Smith
R Paton

Trustees of School Section No 4 in the Tp. of Nottawasaga

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At Quaker Hill School, Ontario, the old wooden building has been carefully preserved beside its smart new replacement.

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It shows little in these minutes but a word should be said here for the time and attention many of these trustees gave to their unpaid and usually thankless positions year after year. The same names occur in the minutes again and again and only one who has served on a School Board can realize how onerous their duties were. If we build another school it would be a good idea next time to name it after one of these outstanding oldtime trustees of long service for truly they are the unpaid and unsung heroes of the school world.

Masset, B.C.
1927

The trustees often provided treats at the school closing picnic, and the best was the home-made ice cream. More than just a treat, it was one of the day's events. The boys cracked ice in gunny sacks with the flat side of an axe, and packed it into the ice cream maker. The kids took turns turning the crank until it wouldn't turn any more. Then the freezer sat covered in a shady spot so the ice cream could cure while the races were run and the picnic lunch was set out. It was a wonderful way to end the afternoon.

Teacher
New Brunswick, 1920

Treat at school closing, Tryon School, Prince Edward Island, around 1920

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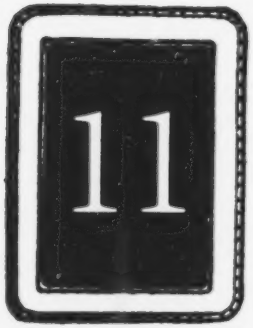
The forces of social change



have now all but eliminated the one-room school from the Canadian scene. Indeed, the one-room school system was barely underway when efforts began to dismantle it in favour of school consolidation. From the turn of the century to the 1960s, there were sporadic skirmishes between education authorities and the entrenched forces of rural communities.

For 70 years, the arguments for consolidated schools remained the same. Education officials said the little schools were wasteful, inefficient and did not offer children the educational opportunities available in consolidated schools, with their better-trained teachers, their gyms and laboratories and auditoriums.

For 70 years, rural Canadians held tenaciously to the system that gave them control over their schools. They said that consolidated schools were expensive, would drive taxes up, were too far from home for little children, and that transportation would be costly and unreliable.

During one of the earliest waves of official enthusiasm for consolidation, Sir William Macdonald gave it a major boost. He financed the building of consolidated schools in four provinces. They were to serve as models, experimental schools that would demonstrate the advantages of consolidation. Macdonald's money even covered extra costs, supplemented teachers' salaries, and paid for the horse-drawn school bus service.

The move was a qualified success. It was estimated that attendance at the consolidated schools was 55 percent better than it had been in the one-room schools, and more students were going beyond grade eight. In three of the four provinces involved, the governments took over funding to encourage boards to amalgamate. In Nova Scotia, 53 small school districts were consolidated in 22. New Brunswick built four consolidated schools, and Ontario had 10 by 1920. These were not huge complexes in some distant urban centre; they were still small schools in relatively nearby towns.

But resistance was unbelievably stubborn. School sections involved in a consolidated school in Middleton, Nova Scotia, withdrew, they said, because of the distance their children had to travel. In Hillsborough, in Macdonald's home province of Prince Edward Island, there was incessant complaint and wrangling over the operation of the school. Macdonald spent extra money to keep it open six years past the original three years of his grant, but in 1912, in spite of an impressive record of success, the school was closed. Then it was left empty to fall apart, until it was finally torn down.

The provinces did all they could, just as Macdonald had, offering grants for salaries, for transportation, for building costs. Quebec's Protestant board promised not to dispose of existing small school buildings for three years after a consolidation.

The inspectors never lost an opportunity to promote consolidation. In 1919, when a southwestern Ontario community had to replace a small school destroyed in a wind storm, the inspector and a representative of the department of education talked to a local ratepayers' meeting. They were considering the amalgamation of three schools that were no more than two or three miles apart. The officials explained that the government would pay 40 percent of the cost of the building, 40 percent of transportation charges and donate $2,000.

When the ratepayers voted, there were exactly three votes in favor of consolidation. A new one-room school was built within weeks, and did not close until 1964.

In 1928, Prince Edward Island's chief superintendent for education was nearly eloquent on the subject. He said 154 schools were operating with an attendance of less than 15 pupils.

"Our system of small local districts was developed in a time when every little community was of necessity self-contained and lived largely unto itself, before the advent of the railway, steam and electric power, the automobile, the telegraph, the telephone or the radio. These things have revolutionized production, transportation, communication and commerce. They have fostered the development of a new and broader social consciousness and enabled large numbers to associate in united undertakings for common ends which before were quite impossible of achievement, yet in the field of rural school administration we are still fumbling about with a system that was contemporary with the stage coach, the sickle and the travelling shoemaker. Antiquity is no reproach. The present system is not arraigned because it is old, but because it is outgrown. It hampers development like a tight-fitting garment on a fast-growing boy. The life of the people unfolds; it develops and new forms, new systems must be evolved to meet the new needs."

There was a respite for a few years. The education establishment turned its attention to improving high schools. The Depression cut down available funds; and then World War Two absorbed the nation's energies.

But during the 1940s and 1950s, the studies began again, emphasizing the gap in living standards that had grown between town and country. In 1941, the Dominion Bureau of Statistics said the average per capita farm income was $351, non-farm $707. Only nine percent of farm homes had flush toilets, 50 percent had phones, 37 percent had electric lights, 22 percent had refrigerators. Where services existed in rural areas, they were expensive, and there were lots of other places for a farm family's cash to go.

What was true of the homes was also true of the schools the children were attending. A 1950 report indicated 80 percent were without artificial lighting, 71 percent had outhouses, only 67 percent had desks of the right size for the students. They got far more than their share of under-trained, or inexperienced teachers. Eighty-five percent of Ontario's normal school graduates did their first teaching in rural schools. And 70 percent of Ontario's farm children were still leaving school at the end of grade eight.

The time had finally come. In some areas it was the trustees who initiated the change. W. J. Judd, a former inspector in Thunder Bay, Ontario, recalled that when the

drive was on for the setting up of larger school areas, they established seven in the inspectorate. All came through requests from trustees. In no instance was it necessary to convince ratepayers that this was a worthwhile venture. The trustees did the necessary groundwork after coming to him for information.

In other areas, though, there was resistance to the last day. Kenneth Armstrong presided over the transition in an area northwest of Toronto, and he said it was made cautiously. "I think the underlying objection was that the rural communities felt it was the beginning of the end of local autonomy and local control. They felt the teachers would not feel an obligation to the local community, and they were afraid of the taxes.

"As a first step in consolidation, we brought their grade seven and eight classes to graded schools for shop and home ec. Then we brought them for a whole year. That was acceptable to parents.

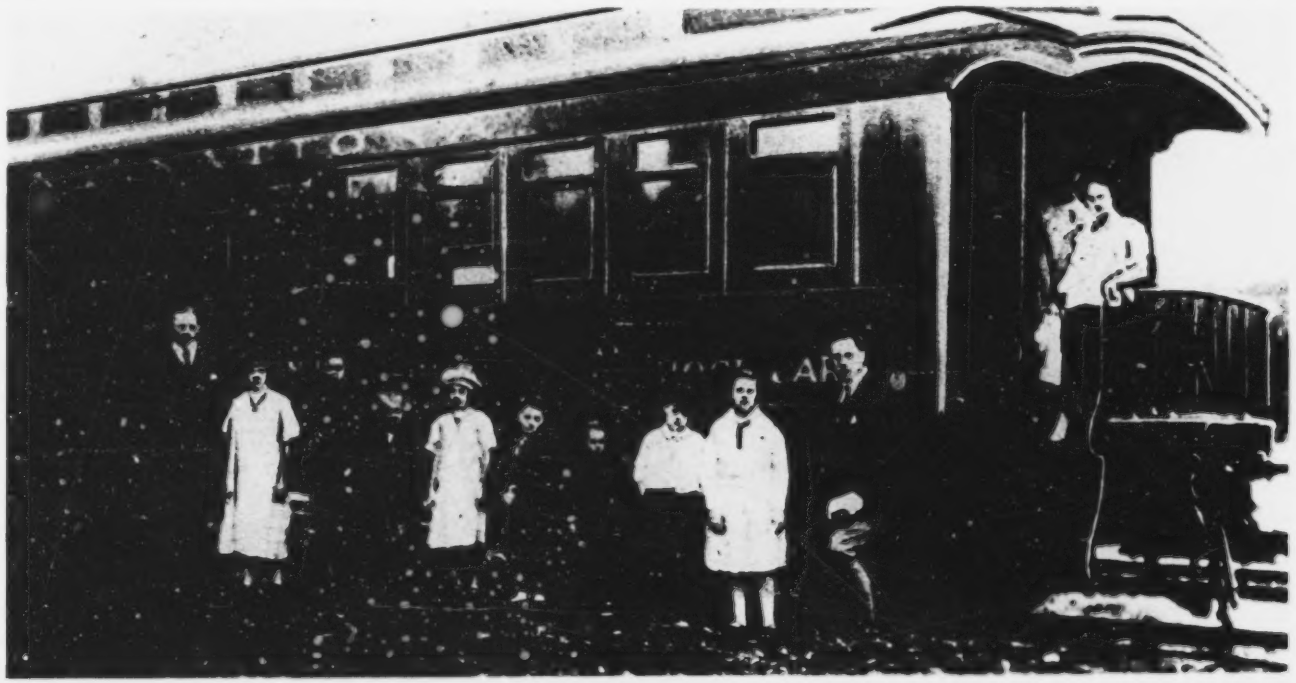
"The grades seven and eight went home all excited about basketball, the auditorium, the shop. The older pupils smothered parental objections. The kids sold it. Admittedly, we sold the program to the children.

"We made sure the buses ran like clockwork. The board owned and operated the buses, and the parents used to say we can't complain about the transportation.

"We took in pupils from 11 different schools. Some of them were up to standard, others weren't. If they weren't up to expectations, it was not by reason of the fact that they had been in a rural school. The one-room school under the jurisdiction of a good teacher was equal academically to a graded school. There were three major drawbacks, the isolation, the teachers working in isolation, the lack of scope for free reading – each had its own little library, but you couldn't provide enough reading for grades one to eight, it was just beyond their scope. Any child who wanted to read had pretty well read them all, and children in those days were often not encouraged in public libraries.

"The other drawback was that the rural schools got more than their share of inexperienced teachers.

"Teachers were absorbed [in the consolidated schools] if they wished. Some did, some didn't, some fitted, some didn't, some were happy and some weren't.



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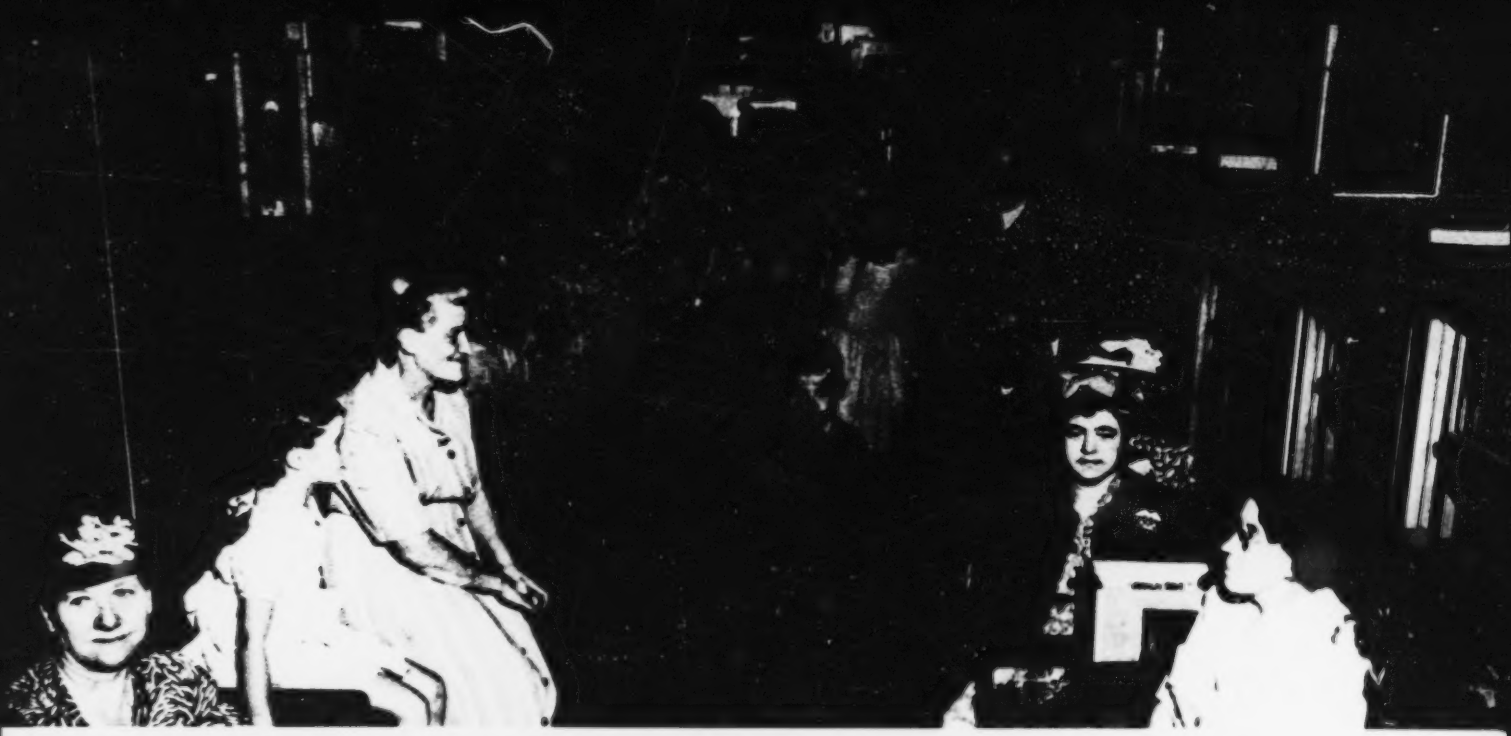

Above and left: In an imaginative experiment, converted railway cars were used as travelling schoolrooms in northern Ontario for nearly forty years. The first, brainchild of teacher Fred Sloman, took to the rails in 1926. During the late 1940s there were seven of them. They parked at a siding for a few days at a time. Children came out of the bush to attend classes and receive homework to do while the school moved down the line to another siding.

"Retraining the teacher was my job. The chief difficulty was teacher adjustment. The adjustment of pupils was quite a smooth operation. It wasn't that the teachers were obstinate or mule headed; they had come to fit a mold that was suitable to the job they were doing. Some found it most difficult to change.

"Teachers had been isolated one from the other. Before consolidation took place we tried to get teachers together to bridge the gap, so they wouldn't be thrown together all at once. I suppose today they'd call it communicating. Teachers had had all grades from one to eight. Then they had 35 pupils, all in one grade – a very different type of experience. In the rural schools they knew the kids, all their shortcomings and longcomings, as it were. Then they had a roomful of kids they didn't know at all. In September a few threw up their hands and said, 'I don't know how I'm ever going to do it.' We did some subject exchange to help teachers get to know the pupils."

J. H. Blocksidge of Alberta's ministry of education echoed the 1928 P.E.I. report: "I came to be a superintendent of schools at the time of the great exodus from these schools, and helped to close about forty of them, well past their time of usefulness.

"Like hamlets ten miles apart, the one-room school functioned when transportation was limited to the horse and buggy or wagon. With the passing of that era, except for situations of extreme isolation, the one-room school became an anachronism."

But anyone who asks questions about it around the table in a farm kitchen may still be told with some bitterness, "They told us it would be up to the community."

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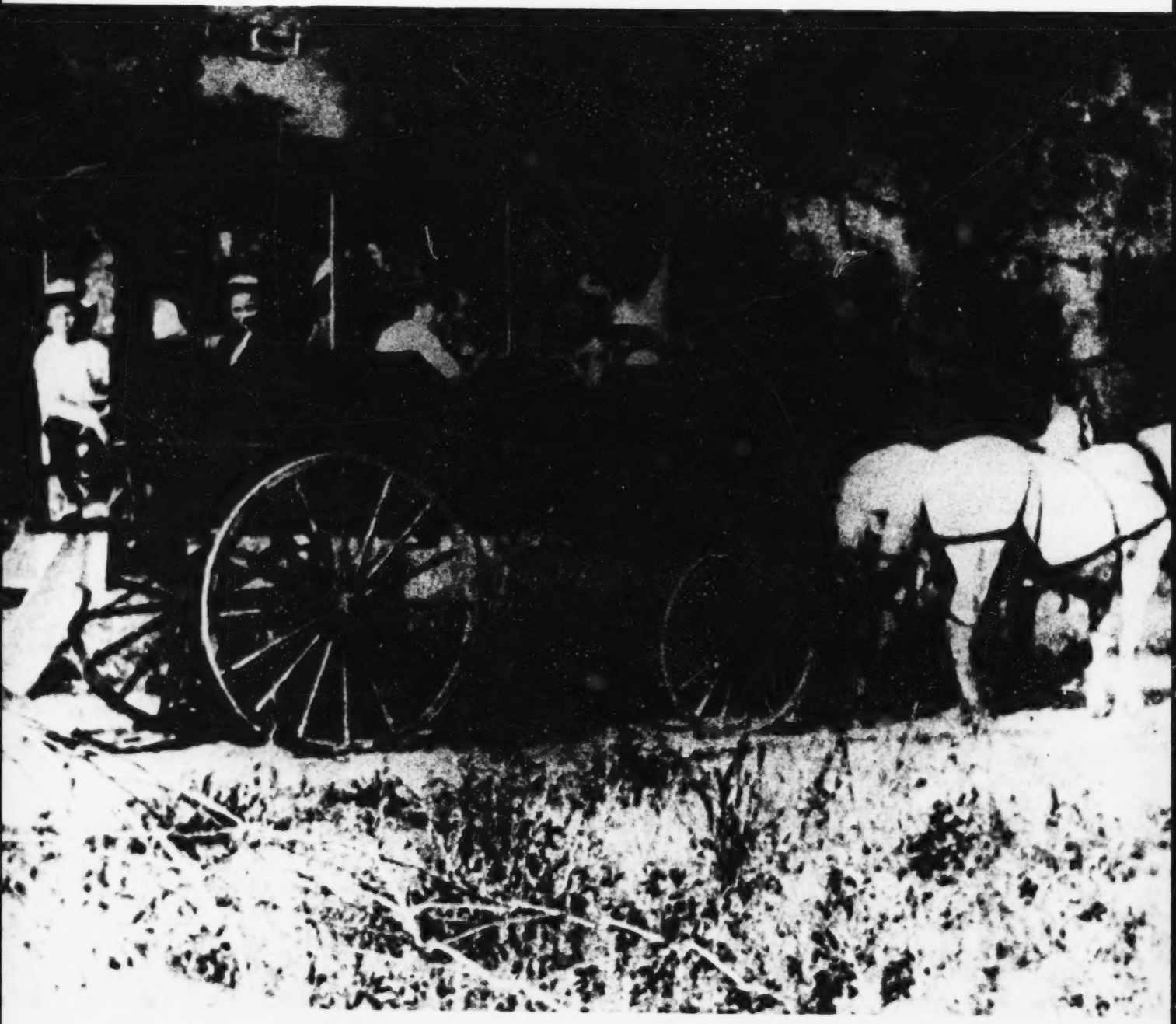

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In the year 1922, the Savard, Ontario Consolidated School was opened to take care of the education of the many pupils who were up to that time attending small one-roomed schools in the township of Savard, Robillard and part of Truax.

In the beginning, the school board supplied the spring wagons and sleighs for transportation. In the 1930s this was improved upon by the purchase of rubber-tired wagons.

If a child lived on a side road, he was required to walk three-quarters of a mile to meet the bus on the main road.

The buses were built of wood and were equipped with blankets and charcoal-burning foot warmers. Additional blankets were supplied by families. Later the warmers were replaced by small wood burning heaters.

A blanket and foot warmer were shared by a number of pupils. Methods of draping the blankets over the warmers to conserve and concentrate the heat were often employed by the more ingenious pupils.

In those days discipline was not a problem on the school bus, because a driver could invite a trouble-maker to disembark and walk behind the bus for a required distance. This treatment always proved effective on a cold, blustery night. This may sound like harsh treatment, but there are still some well-respected community-spirited citizens living in this community today who often reminisce about the miles they ran behind the bus for committing some misdemeanour.

Savard Women's Institute
Tweedsmuir History

Early school bus, Summerland, British Columbia, about 1909

As late as the 1950s students in the Muskoka area of Ontario travelled to school in this unusual school boat.

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During the spring of 1904, the ratepayers of Tryon, having moved their school to a more desirable site, that is, having moved it from the bog area of Tryon, and having had allotted to them one of the Macdonald School Garden Awards, they began to agitate for consolidation with the two neighbouring districts of Lady Fane and West Tryon. This was to be the first school consolidation in Prince Edward Island.

The government lent its assistance to the undertaking by continuing to pay the same statutary allowances which they had formerly paid the teachers of the three separate schools concerned. By this arrangement sufficient money was saved to defray the expenses of conveying the pupils by van.

The three districts had one hundred and ten pupils ranging in age from 5 to 16. A disused church in good condition was located on the opposite side of the road from the school and this was rented for a small sum and used as a third room.

The major consolidation of 1973 did not go through unchallenged in our community.

The Women's Institute, over the years, did a lot to help the local school, as they raised money to supplement supplies and improve the educational opportunities for the young in the community. In June 1973, the Women's Institute decided that if consolidation was to close their school then they would reclaim from the school anything they felt they owned. One night all was gathered from the school, save for the piano. Amusingly enough, the next day a truck from the Department of Education arrived at Tryon Consolidated only to find a piano and a couple of old closets.

History of Tryon Consolidated School
1904-1973

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The Macdonald Consolidated School, Prince Edward Island

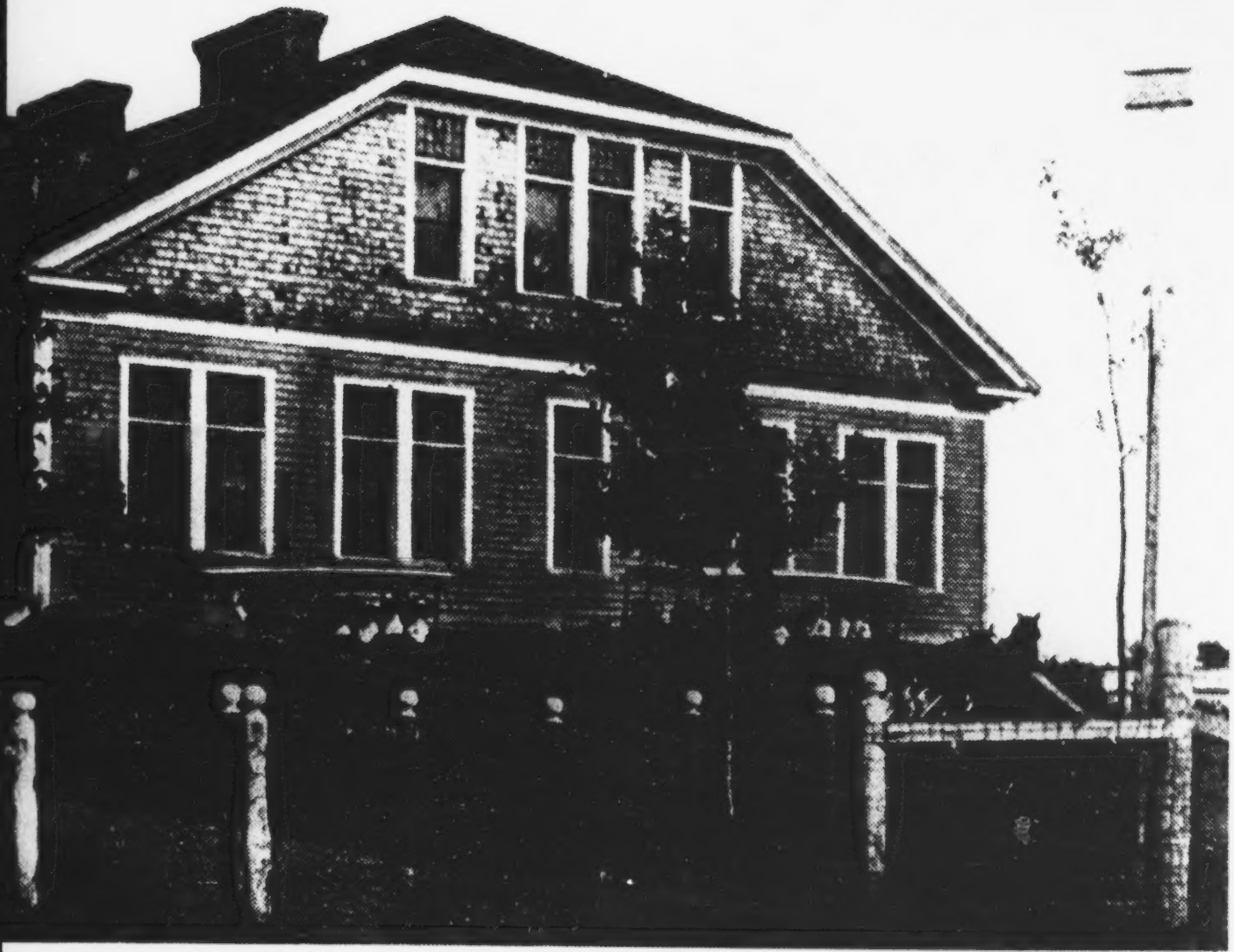

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photo courtesy Omer Burzdzus

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Our system of small local districts was developed in a time when every little community was of necessity self-contained and lived largely unto itself, before the advent of the railway, steam and electric power, the automobile, the telegraph or the telephone or the radio.

Antiquity is no reproach. The system is not arraigned because it is old, but because it is outgrown. It hampers development like a tight fitting garment on a fast growing boy. The life of the people unfolds, it develops, and new forms, new systems, must be evolved to meet the new needs.

Chief superintendent
Prince Edward Island, 1928

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Acknowledgments

Books such as this owe a great deal to Canada's amateur historians and historical societies. The country's archives, thank goodness, are full of their labours of love, local histories alive with the stories and laughter of the other days. Two in particular are fairly extensively quoted here, both centennial projects of branches of the Alberta Teachers' Associations: *Clover and Wild Strawberries*, the history of Athabasca County, compiled by the Athabasca teachers, and *Schools of the Parkland*, compiled by the Red Deer local.

It was through the Superannuated Teachers of Ontario, and the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario that I got in touch with many of the men and women who remember with affection their days in rural schools.

The people who took time to tell old stories, track down old pictures, ferret through old files, include Kenneth Armstrong and W. J. Judd of Ontario and J. H. Blocksidge of Alberta, all former teachers and inspectors; Rosella Cunningham and Edna Howie who were public health nurses in Ontario; Cora Bailey, Amelia Betts, Jessie Finlayson, Margaret Hamilton, Ruby McLean, Leota McCutcheon, Grace Merchand, Marjory Monoghan, Dora Tansley and Olive Thomson, who taught in several provinces. Former students include, Glen Cole, Tim Dickson, Linda Kirlis and all the Jamieson family. Kathy Harrison in Alberta, and Amelia Hodder in Newfoundland both did yeoman service as researchers, and Mrs. Hodder's personal memories as student and teacher added a special touch.

People in all of the provincial archives responded quickly and efficiently to requests. Pictures and material came from: Public Archives of Nova Scotia; Provincial Archives of New Brunswick; Confederation Centre Library, Charlottetown, P.E.I.; Archives Nationales, Québec; Public Archives of Canada; Department of Public Records and Archives, Ontario; Provincial Archives, Manitoba; Saskatchewan Archives Office, Glenbow-Alberta Institute; Provincial Archives of British Columbia; the Metro Toronto Library Board; Canadian National Archives; Ontario Institute for Studies in Education; the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario.

They also came from George and Jean Jamieson who, with other neighbours in the Crinan community, were so kind to us during the years that we enjoyed their Argyle schoolhouse.

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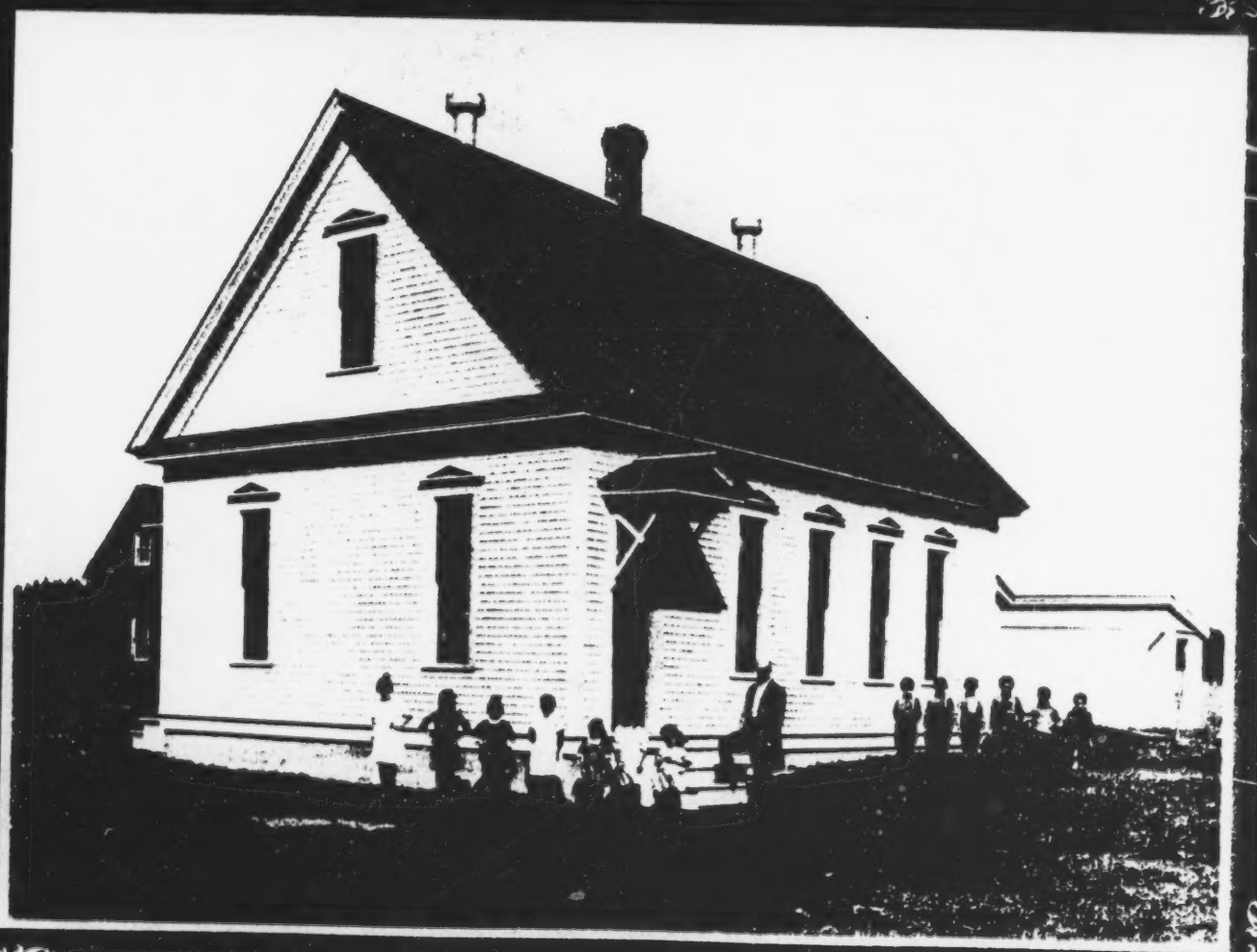
Sometimes born amid the passions of religious, class, or ethnic strife, nurtured amid the hardships and privations of frontier life, the one-room schools that dotted the countryside from coast to coast quickly came to be a vital force in the lives of the isolated communities they served. This book recreates the life and lore of the rural one-room school, and evokes a vanished era in Canada's past.